

who have only a *notion* of Christ, that he is the *holy One of God*, and have no faith in him, or love to him, go no further than the devil doth. (3.) He in effect acknowledgeth that Christ was too hard for him, and that he could not stand before the power of Christ; *let us alone*, for if thou take us to task we are undone, thou canst *destroy us*. This is the misery of those wicked spirits, that they persist in their rebellion, and yet know it will end in their destruction. (4.) He desires to have *nothing to do* with Jesus Christ, for he *despairs* of being *saved* by him, and *dreads* being *destroyed* by him. *What have we to do with thee?* If thou wilt let us alone, we will let thee alone. See whose language they speak, that *say to the Almighty, depart from us*. This being an *unclean spirit*, therefore hated and dreaded Christ, because he knew him to be a *holy One*; for the *carnal mind is enmity against God*, especially against *his holiness*.

2. The victory which Jesus Christ obtained over the unclean spirit; *for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*, and so he makes it to appear; nor will he be turned back from prosecuting this war, either by his flatteries, or by his menaces. It is in vain for Satan to beg and pray, *Let us alone*, his power must be broken, and the poor man must be relieved; and therefore, (1.) Jesus *commands*: As he taught, so he healed *with authority*. Jesus *rebuked him*, he *chid him*, and *threatened him*, imposed silence upon him. *Hold thy peace*; *σιμῶθῃτι*, *be muzzled*; Christ has a muzzle for that unclean spirit when he *favours*, as well as when he *barks*; such acknowledgments of him as this was, Christ *disdains*, so far is he from *accepting* them. Those that confess Christ to be the *holy One of God*, that under the cloke of that profession they may carry on malicious, mischievous designs, their confession is doubly an abomination to the Lord Jesus, as it sues in his name for a licence to sin, and shall therefore be put to silence and shame. But this is not all, he must not only *hold his peace*, but he must *come out of the man*; this was it he dreaded, his being restrained from doing farther mischief. But, (2.) The unclean spirit *yields*, for there is no remedy, *ver. 26*. He *tore him*, put him into a *strong convulsion*; that one could have thought he had been pulled in pieces; when he would not *touch* Christ, in fury at him he grievously disturbed this poor creature. Thus, when Christ, by his grace, delivers poor souls out of the hands of Satan, it is not without a grievous tofs and tumult in the soul; for that spiteful enemy will *disquiet* those, whom he cannot *destroy*. He *cried with a loud voice* to frighten the spectators, and make himself seem terrible, as if he would have it thought, that tho' he was conquered, he was but just conquered, and that he hoped to rally again, and recover his ground.

Secondly, The impressions which this miracle made upon the minds of the people, *ver. 27, 28*.

1. It astonished them that saw it. *They were all amazed*. It was evident beyond contradiction, that the man was possessed, witness the tearing of him, and the *loud voice* with which the *spirit cried*; it was evident he was *forced out* by the authority of Christ; this was surprizing to them, and put them upon considering with themselves, and enquiring of one another, *What is this new doctrine?* For it must certainly be of God, which is thus confirmed. He hath certainly an authority to command us, who hath ability to *command even the unclean spirits*, and they cannot resist him, but are forced to *obey him*. The Jewish exorcists pretended by charm, or invocation, to drive away evil spirits; but this was quite another thing, *with authority he commands them*. Surely it is our interest to make him our friend, who has the controll of infernal spirits.

2. It raised his reputation among all that heard it. *Immediately his fame spread abroad into the whole adjacent region of Galilee*, which was a third part of the land of Canaan. The story was presently got into every one's mouth, and people wrote it to their friends all the country over, together with the remark made upon it, *What new doctrine is this?* So that it was universally concluded, that he was a *teacher come from God*, and under that character he shone more bright, than if he had appeared in all the external pomp and power, which the Jews expected their Messiah to *appear in*; and thus he *prepared his own way*, now John who was his harbinger, was clapped up; and the fame of this miracle spread the further, because as yet the Pharisees who *envied* his fame, and laboured to *eclipse* it, had not advanced their blasphemous suggestion, that he *cast out devils* by compact with the *prince of the devils*.

29. And forthwith when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30. But Simons wives mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. 31. And he came and took her by the hand, and lift her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. 32. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. 33. And all the city was gathered together at the door. 34. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and

cast out many devils, and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. 35. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. 36. And Simon, and they that were with him, followed after him. 37. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. 38. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

In these verses we have,

First, A particular account of one miracle that Christ wrought in the cure of Peter's wife's mother, that was ill of a fever. This passage we had before in Matthew. Observe,

1. When Christ had done that which *spread his fame* throughout all parts, he did not then sit still, as some think, they may *lie in bed* when their *name's up*. No, he continued to *do good*, for that was it he aimed at, and not his own honour. Nay, those who are in reputation had need be busy and careful, to keep it up.

2. When he *came out of the synagogue*, where he had taught and healed with a divine authority, yet he conversed familiarly with the poor fishermen that attended him, and did not think it below him. Let the same mind, the same lowly mind, be in us, that was in him.

3. He went into Peter's house, probably invited thither to such entertainment as a poor fisherman could give him, and he accepted of it. The apostles left all for Christ, so far as that what they had should not hinder them from him, yet not so, but that they might use it for him.

4. He cured his mother-in-law that was sick; wherever Christ comes, he comes to do good, and will be sure to pay richly for his entertainment. Observe, How complete the cure was, when *the fever left her*, it did not as usually leave her *weak*, but the same hand that *healed her*, *strengthened her*, so that she was able to *minister* to them: the cure is in order to that, to fit for action, that we may minister to Christ, and to those that are *his*, for his sake.

Secondly, A general account of many cures he wrought. Diseases healed; devils expelled; it was at the *even of the sabbath*, when the *sun did set*, or *was set*; perhaps many scrupled bringing their sick to him, till the sabbath was over, but their weakness therein was no prejudice to them in applying to Christ. Tho' he proved it *lawful to heal on the sabbath days*, yet if any stumbled at it, they were welcome at another time. Now observe,

1. How *numerous* the patients were; *all the city was gathered at the door*, as beggars at a dole. That *one cure* in the synagogue, occasioned this crouding after him. Others speeding well with Christ should quicken us in our enquiries after him. Now the *sun of righteousness riseth with healing under his wings*; to him shall the *gathering of the people be*. Observe, How Christ was flocked after in a *private house*, as well as in the *synagogue*; wherever he is, there let his servants, his patients, be. And in the *evening of the sabbath*, when the publick worship is over, we must continue our attendance upon Jesus Christ; he healed, as Paul preached, *publickly*, and from house to house.

2. How *powerful* the physician was; he *healed all* that were brought to him, tho' never so many. Nor was it some one particular disease, that Christ set up for the cure of, but he healed those that were *sick of divers diseases*, for his word was a *pan-pharmakon*, a salve for every sore. And that miracle particularly which he wrought in the synagogue, he *repeated in the house* at night, for he *cast out many devils*, and *suffered not the devils to speak*, for he made them *know who he was*, and that silenced them. Or, he *suffered them not to say that they knew him*, so it may be read, he would not permit any more of them to say as they did, *ver. 24*. *I know thee, who thou art*.

Thirdly, His retirement to his *private devotion*, *ver. 35*. He *prayed*, prayed alone; to set us an example of secret prayer. Tho' as God he was *prayed to*, as man he *prayed*. Tho' he was glorifying God and doing good in his publick work, yet he found time to be alone with his Father; and thus *it became him to fulfil all righteousness*. Now observe,

1. The time when Christ prayed. (1.) It was *in the morning*, the morning after the *sabbath day*. Note, When a sabbath day is over and past, we must not think that we may intermit our devotion till the next sabbath: no, tho' we go not to the *synagogue*, we must go to the *throne of grace*, every day in the week; and the morning after the sabbath particularly, that we preserve the good impressions of the day. This *morning* was the morning of the *first day of the week*, which afterwards he sanctified, and made remarkable by another sort of *rising early*. (2.) It was early, a *great while before day*. When others were asleep in their beds he was *praying*, as a genuine son of David who seeks God *early*, and *directs his prayer in the morning*; nay, and *at midnight will rise to give thanks*. It has been said that the morning is a friend to the *Muses* (*Aurora Musis amica*) and it is no less so to the *Graces*. When our spirits are most fresh and lively, then we should take time



time for *devout exercises*. He that is the *first* and *best*, ought to have the *first* and *best*.

2. The place *where* he prayed: he *departed into a solitary place*, either out of town, or some remote garden or out-building. Tho' he was in no danger of distraction, or of temptation to vain-glory, yet he retired to set us an example to his own rule, *when thou prayest, enter into thy closet*. Secret prayer must be made secretly. Those that have the most business in publick, and of the best kind, yet must sometimes be *alone with God*; must retire into *solitude*, there to converse with God, and keep up communion with him.

Fourthly, His *return* to his publick work. The disciples thought they were *up early*, but found their Master was *up before them*, and they enquired which way he went, *followed him to his solitary place*, and there found him at prayer, *ver. 36, 37*. And told him he was much wanted, there were a great many patients waiting for him: *all men seek for thee*. They were proud that their Master was become so popular already, and would have him appear *in publick*, yet more in that place, because it was *their own city*; and we are apt to be partial to the places we know, and are interested in. No, faith Christ, Capernaum must not have the monopoly of the Messiah's preaching and miracles. *Let us go into the next towns, the villages that lie about here, that I may preach there also*, and work miracles there, *for therefore came I forth*, not to be constantly resident in one place, but to *go about doing good*. Even the *inhabitants of the villages in Israel shall rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord*, *Judg. v. 11*. Observe, Christ had still an eye to the end *wherefore he came forth*, and closely pursued that; nor will he be drawn by importunity, or the persuasions of his friends to decline from that; for *ver. 39* he *preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee*, and to illustrate and confirm his doctrine, *he cast out devils*. Note, Christ's doctrine is Satan's destruction.

40. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*. 41. And Jesus moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, *I will, be thou clean*. 42. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. 43. And he straightly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; 44. And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thy self to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them. 45. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

We have here the story of Christ's *cleansing* of a leper, which we had before, *Mat. viii. 2*. And it teaches us,

1. *How to apply our selves to Christ*; come as this leper did, (1.) With great *humility*; this leper came *beseeching him, and kneeling down to him*, *ver. 40*. whether giving divine honour to him as God, or rather a less degree of respect as a *great prophet*, it teaches us, that those who would receive grace and mercy from Christ, must ascribe honour and glory to Christ, and approach to him with humility and reverence. (2.) With a firm belief of his power; *thou canst make me clean*. Tho' Christ's outward appearance was but *mean*, yet he had this faith in his power, which implies his belief that he was *sent of God*. He believes it with application, not only in general, *thou canst do every thing*, as *John xi. 22*. but *thou canst make me clean*. Note, What we believe of the power of Christ, we must bring home to our particular case; *thou canst do this for me*. (3.) With submission to the will of Christ; *Lord, if thou wilt*. Not as if he had any doubt of Christ's readiness in general to help the distressed, but with the modesty that became a poor petitioner, he refers his own particular case to him.

2. *What to expect from Christ*; that according to our faith it shall be to us. His address is not in the form of prayer, yet Christ answered it as a request. Note, Affectionate professions of faith in Christ and resignations to him, are the most prevailing petitions for mercy from him, and shall speed accordingly. (1.) Christ was *moved with compassion*. This is added here in Mark, to shew that Christ's power is employed by his pity for the relief of poor souls. That his reasons are fetched from within himself, and we have nothing in us to recommend us to his favour, but our *misery* makes us the object of his *mercy*. And what he doth for us, he doth with all possible tenderness. (2.) He *put forth his hand, and touched him*. He exerted his power, and directed it to *this creature*. In healing souls Christ *toucheth them*, *1 Sam. xx. 26*. When the Queen toucheth for the evil, she saith, *I touch, God heals*, but Christ *toucheth and heals too*. (3.) He said, *I will, be thou clean*. Christ's power was put forth in and by a word, to signify in what way Christ would ordinarily work spiritual cures,

He sends his word and heals, *Psal. cvii. 20*. *John xvii. 17*.—*xv. 3*. The poor leper put an *if* upon the will of Christ, *if thou wilt*; but that *doubt* is soon put out of doubt, *I will*. Christ most readily wills favours to those, that most readily refer themselves to his will. He was confident of Christ's power, *thou canst make me clean*, and Christ will shew how much his power is drawn out into act by the faith of his people, and therefore speaks the word as one having authority, *be thou clean*. And power accompanied this word, and the cure was perfect in an instant, *immediately his leprosy vanished*, and there remained no more sign of it. *Ver. 42*.

3. *What to do when we have received mercy from Christ*; We must with his favours receive his commands. When Christ had cured him, he *strictly charged him*; the word here is very significant, *ἐμπερινοσάμενος*, *graviter interminatus*. I am apt to think this refers not to the directions he gave him to conceal it, *ver. 44*. for those are mentioned by themselves; but that this was such a charge as he gave to the impotent man whom he cured, *John v. 14*. *Go, sin no more, lest a worse thing come to thee*; for the leprosy was ordinarily the punishment of some particular sinners in Miriam's, Gehazi's, and Uzziah's case; now when Christ healed him, he warned him, he threatened him with the fatal consequence of it, if he should return to sin again. He also appointed him (1.) To *shew himself to the priest*, that the priest by his own judgment of this leper, might be a witness for Christ, that he was the Messiah, *Mat. xi. 5*. (2.) Till he had done that, not to say any thing of it to any man: this is an instance of the humility of Christ, and his self-denial, that he did not seek his own honour, *did not strive or cry*, *Isa. xlii. 2*. And it is an example to us not to seek our own glory, *Prov. xxv. 27*. He must not proclaim it, because that would much increase the crowd that followed Christ, which he thought was too great already; not as if he were unwilling to do good to all, to as many as came; but he would do it with as little noise as might be, would have no offence given to the government, no disturbance of the publick peace, not any thing done that looked like ostentation, or an affectation of popular applause. What to think of the leper's publishing it, and blazing it abroad, I know not; the concealment of the good characters, and good works of good men, better become them than their friends; nor are we always bound by the modest commands of humble men. The leper ought to have observed his orders, yet no doubt it was with a good design that he proclaimed the cure, and it had no other ill effect, but that it increased the multitudes that followed Christ, to that degree, that he could no more openly enter into the city; not upon the account of persecution, there was no danger of that yet; but because the crowd was so great, that the streets would not hold them, which obliged him to go into desert places, to a mountain, *chap. iii. 13*. to the sea-side, *chap. iv. 1*. This shews how expedient it was for us, that Christ should go away, and send the Comforter, for his bodily presence could be but in one place at a time; and those that came to him from every quarter could not get near him; but by his spiritual presence, he is with his people wherever they are, and comes to them to every quarter.

## CHAP. II.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Christ's healing a man that was sick of a palsy, *ver. 1—12*. (2.) His calling Matthew from the receipt of custom, and his eating, upon that occasion, with publicans and sinners, and justifying himself in so doing, *ver. 13—17*. (3.) His justifying his disciples in not fasting so much as those of the Pharisees did, *ver. 18—22*. (4.) His justifying them in plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day, *ver. 23—28*. All which passages we had before, *Matt. ix and xii*.

1. **A**ND again he entred into Capernaum, after some days, and it was noised that he was in the house. 2. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. 3. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was born of four. 4. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. 5. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. 6. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, 7. Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? 8. And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?



hearts? 9. Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*: or to say, *Arise, and take up thy bed and walk*? 10. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy) 11. I say unto thee, *Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house*. 12. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all, insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, *We never saw it on this fashion*.

Christ having been for some time preaching about in the country, here returns to Capernaum his head-quarters, and makes his appearance there, in hopes by this time, the talk and crowd would be somewhat abated. Now observe,

1. The great resort there was to him. Tho' he was in the house, either Peter's house, or some lodgings of his own which he had taken, yet people came to him as soon as it was noised that he was in town; they did not stay till he appeared in the synagogue, which they might be sure he would do on the sabbath day, but straightway many were gathered together to him. Where the king is, there is the court; where Shiloh is, there shall the gathering of the people be. In improving opportunities for our souls, we must take care not to lose time. One invited another, come let us go see Jesus, so that his house could not contain his visitants. There was no room to receive them, they were so numerous, no not so much as about the door. A blessed sight to see people thus flying like a cloud to Christ's house, tho' it was but a poor one, and as the doves to their windows!

2. The good entertainment Christ gave them, the best his house would afford, and better than any other could, he preached the word unto them, ver. 2. Many of them, perhaps, came only for cures, and many, perhaps, only for curiosity, to get a sight of him; but when he had them together he preached to them: Tho' the synagogue door was open to him at proper times, he thought it not at all amiss to preach in a house, on a week day; tho' some might reckon it both an improper place and an improper time. *Blessed are ye that sow besides all waters*, Isa. xxxii. 20.

3. The presenting of a poor cripple to him to be helped by him. The patient was one sick of the palsy, it should seem not as that, *Mat. viii. 6. grievously tormented*, but perfectly disabled, so that he was born of four, was carried upon a bed, as if he had been upon a bier by four persons: It was his misery that he needed to be so carried, and speaks the calamitous state of human life; it was their charity who did so carry him, and speaks the compassion that it is justly expected should be in the children of men, towards their fellow-creatures in distress, because we know not how soon the distress may be our own. These kind relations or neighbours thought if they could but carry this poor man, once to Christ, they should not need to carry him any more; and therefore made hard shift to get him to him; and when they could not otherwise get to him, they uncovered the roof where he was, ver. 4. I see no necessity to conclude, that Christ was preaching in an upper room, tho' in such the Jews that had stately houses had their oratories; for then to what purpose should the croud stand before the door? as wisdom's clients used to do, *Prov. viii. 34*. But I rather conjecture, that the house he was in was so little and mean, (agreeable to his present state) that it had no upper room, but the ground-floor was open to the roof: and these petitioners for the poor paralytick, resolving not to be balked when they could not get through the croud at the door, get their friend by some means or other to the roof of the house, took off some of the tiles, and so let him down upon his bed, with cords, into the house where Christ was preaching. This spoke both their faith, and their fervency in this address to Christ. Hereby it appeared, they were in earnest, and would not go away, nor let Christ go without a blessing, *Gen. xxxii. 26*.

4. The kind word Christ said to this poor patient. He saw their faith; perhaps not so much his, for his distemper hindered him from the exercise of faith, but theirs that brought him. In curing the centurion's servant, Christ took notice of it, as an instance of his faith, that he did not bring him to Christ, but believed he could cure him at a distance; here he commended their faith, because they did bring their friend through so much difficulty. Note, True faith and strong faith may work variously, conquering sometimes the objections of reason, sometimes those of sense, but it shall be accepted and approved by Jesus Christ however. Christ said, *Son, thy sins be forgiven thee*. The compellation is very tender, son, intimating a fatherly care of him, and concern for him; Christ owns true believers as his sons: a son, and yet sick of the palsy. Herein God deals with you as with sons. The cordial is very rich; *thy sins be forgiven thee*. Note, (1.) Sin is the procuring cause of all our pains and sicknesses. The word of Christ was to take his thoughts off from the disease which was the effect, and to lead them to the sin the cause, that he might be more concerned about that, to get that pardoned. (2.) God doth then graciously take away the sting and malignity of sickness, when he forgives sin; recovery from sickness is then a mercy indeed, when way is made for it by the pardon of sin. See *Isa. xxxviii. 17. Psalm ciii. 3*. The way to remove the effect, is to take away

the cause. Pardon of sin strikes at the root of all diseases, and either cures them, or alters their property.

5. The cavil of the Scribes at that which Christ said, and a demonstration of the unreasonableness of their cavil. They were expositors of the law, and their doctrine was true, that it is blasphemy for any creature to undertake the pardon of sin; and it is God's prerogative, *Isa. xliii. 25*. But, as is usual with such teachers, their application was false, and was the effect of their ignorance and enmity to Christ. It is true, none can forgive sins but God only; but it is false, that therefore Christ cannot, who had abundantly proved himself to have a divine power. But, Christ perceived in his spirit, that they so reasoned within themselves; this proves him to be God, and therefore confirmed what was to be proved, that he had authority to forgive sins; for he searched the heart, and knew what was in man, *Rev. ii. 23*. God's royalties are inseparable, and he that could know thoughts, could forgive sins. And this magnifies the grace of Christ, in pardoning sin, that he knew mens thoughts, and therefore knows more than any other can know, both of the sinfulness of their sins, and the particulars of them, and yet is ready to pardon. Now he proves his power to forgive sin, by demonstrating his power to cure the man sick of the palsy, ver. 9, 10, 11. He would not have pretended to do the one, if he could not have done the other. That ye may know that the Son of man, the Messiah, has power on earth to forgive sin, that I have that power, *Thou that art sick of the palsy, arise, take up thy bed*. Now, (1.) This was a suitable argument in itself. He could not have cured the disease, which was the effect, if he could not have taken away the sin, which was the cause. And besides, his curing diseases was a figure of his pardoning sin, for sin is the disease of the soul; when it is pardoned, it is healed. He that could by a word accomplish the sign, could doubtless perform the thing signified. (2.) It was suited to them. These carnal Scribes would be more affected, with such a sensible effect of a pardon, as the cure of the disease, and be sooner convinced by it, than by any other more spiritual consequences; therefore it was proper enough to appeal, whether it is easier to say, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*, or to say, *Arise and walk*? The removing of the punishment as such, was the remitting of the sin; he that could go so far in the cure, no doubt could perfect it. See *Isa. xxxiii. ult*.

6. The cure of the sick man, and impression it made upon the people, ver. 12. He not only arose out of his bed, perfectly well, but, to shew that he had perfect strength restored to him, he took up his bed, because it lay in the way, and went forth before them all; and they were all amazed, as well they might, and glorified God, as indeed they ought; saying, *We never saw it on this fashion*; never were such wonders as these done before in our time. Note, Christ's works were without precedent. When we see what he doth in healing souls, we must own we never saw the like.

13. And he went forth again by the sea-side, and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. 14. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. 15. And it came to pass, that as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. 16. And when the Scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? 17. When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole, have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Here is, 1. Christ preaching by the sea-side, ver. 3. whither he went for room, because he found, upon second trial, no house or street large enough to contain his auditory; but upon the strand there might come as many as would. It should seem by this, that our Lord Jesus had a strong voice, and could, and did, speak loud; for wisdom crieth without, in the places of concourse. Wherever he goes, though it be to the sea-side, multitudes resort to him. Wherever the doctrine of Christ is faithfully preached, though it be driven into corners, or into deserts, we must follow it.

2. His calling Levi, the same with Matthew, who had a place in the custom-house at Capernaum, from which he was denominated a publican; his place fixed him by the water-side, and thither Christ went to meet with him, and to give him an effectual call. This Levi is here said to be the son of Alphaeus, or Cleophas, husband to that Mary, who was sister, or near kinswoman, to the virgin Mary; and if so, he was own brother to James the less, and Jude, and Simon the Canaanite, so that there were four brothers of them apostles. It is probable that Matthew was but a loose extravagant young man, or else, being a Jew, he would



would never have been a publican. However, Christ called him to follow him. Paul, though a Pharisee, had been one of the chief of sinners, and yet was called to be an apostle. With God, thro' Christ, there is mercy to pardon the greatest sins, and grace to sanctify the greatest sinners. Matthew, that had been a publican, became an evangelist, the first that put pen to paper, and the fullest in writing the life of Christ. Great sin and scandal, before conversion, is no bar to great gifts, graces, and advancements after; nay, God may be the more glorified, Gal. i. 6. Christ prevented him with this call; in bodily cures ordinarily he was sought unto, but in these spiritual cures, he was found of them that sought him not. For this is the great evil and peril of the disease of sin, that those that are under it, desire not to be made whole.

3. His familiar converse with publicans and sinners, ver. 15. We are here told, (1.) That Christ sat at meat in Levi's house, who invited him and his disciples to the farewell-feast he made to his friends, when he left all to attend on Christ: such a feast he made, as Elisha did, 1 Kings xix. 21. to shew, not only with what cheerfulness in himself, but with what thankfulness to God, he quitted all, in compliance to Christ's call. Fitly did he make the day of his espousals to Christ a festival day. This was also to testify his respects to Christ, and the grateful sense he had of his kindness, in snatching him from the receipt of custom, as a brand out of the burning. (2.) That many publicans and sinners sat with Christ in Levi's house; for there were many belonging to that custom-house, and they followed him. They followed Levi, so some understand it, supposing that like Zaccheus he was chief among the publicans, and was rich; and for that reason, the inferior sort of them attended him for what they could get. I rather take it, that they followed Jesus, because of the report they had heard of him. They did not, for conscience sake, leave all to follow him, but for curiosity sake they came to Levi's feast to see him; whatever brought them there, they were sitting with Jesus and his disciples. The publicans are here and elsewhere ranked with sinners, the worst of sinners: (1.) Because commonly they were such; so general were the corruptions in the execution of that office, oppressing, exacting, and taking bribes or fees to extortion, and accusing falsely, Luke iii. 13—19. A faithful fair-dealing publican was so rare, even at Rome, that one Sabinus, who kept a clean reputation in that office, was after his death honoured with this inscription, καλῶς τελωνήσαντι, here lies an honest publican. (2.) Because the Jews had a particular antipathy to them, and their office, as an affront to the liberty of their nation, and a badge of their slavery, and therefore put them into an ill name, and thought it scandalous to be seen in their company. Such as these our blessed Lord was pleased to converse with, when he appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh.

4. The offence, which the scribes and Pharisees took at this, ver. 16. They would not come to hear him preach, which they might have been convinced and edified by, but they would come themselves to see him sit with publicans and sinners, which they would be provoked by. They endeavoured to put the disciples out of conceit with their Master, as a man not of that sanctity and severe morals that became his character; and therefore put the question to them, How is it, that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? Note, It is no new thing, for that which is both well done, and well designed, to be mis-represented, and turned to the reproach of the wisest and best of men.

5. Christ's justification of himself in it, ver. 17. He stood to what he did, and would not withdraw, though the Pharisees were offended; as Peter afterwards did, Gal. ii. 12. Note, Those are too tender of their own good name, who, to preserve it with some nice people, will decline a good work. Christ would not do so. They thought the publicans were to be hated: No, saith Christ, they are to be pitied, they are sick, and need a physician; they are sinners, and need a saviour. They thought Christ's character should separate him from them; no, saith Christ, my commission directs me to them; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If the world had been righteous, there had been no occasion for my coming, either to preach repentance, or to purchase remission. It is to a sinful world that I am sent, and therefore my business lies most with those that are the greatest sinners in it. Or thus; I am not come to call the righteous, the proud Pharisees that think themselves righteous, that ask, wherein shall we return? Mal. iii. 7. of what shall we repent? but poor publicans, that own themselves to be sinners, and are glad to be invited, and encouraged to repent. It is good dealing with those that there is hopes of; now there is more hope of a fool, than of one that is wise in his own conceit, Prov. xxvi. 12.

18. And the disciples of John, and of the Pharisees used to fast; and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John, and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? 19. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20. But the days will come, when the

bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. 21. No man also soweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. 22. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles, else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles. 23. And it came to pass that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath-day, and his disciples began as they went to pluck the ears of corn. 24. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath-day that which is not lawful? 25. And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? 26. How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shew-bread, which is not lawful to eat, but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? 27. And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: 28. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Christ had been put to justify himself in conversing with publicans and sinners: Here he is put to justify his disciples; and in what they do according to his will he will justify them and bear them out.

First, He justifies them in their not fasting, which was turned to their reproach by the Pharisees; why do the Pharisees and the disciples of John fast? They use to fast, the Pharisees fasted twice in the week, Luke xviii. 12. and probably the disciples of John did so too; and, it should seem, this very day, when Christ and his disciples were feasting in Levi's house, was their fast-day, for the word is νηστειᾶσι, they do fast, or are fasting, which aggravated the offence. Thus apt are strict professors to make their own practice a standard, and to censure and condemn all that do not fully come up to it. They invidiously suggest, that if Christ went among sinners to do them good, as he had pleaded, yet the disciples went to indulge their appetites, for they never knew what it was to fast, or to deny themselves. Note, Ill will always suspects the worst.

Two things Christ pleads in excuse of his disciples not fasting.

1. That these were easy days with them, and fasting was not so seasonable now as it would be hereafter, ver. 19, 20. There is a time for all things. Those that enter into the married state, must expect care and trouble in the flesh, and yet during the nuptial solemnity they are merry, and think it becomes them to be so; it was very absurd for Sampson's bride to weep before him, during the days that the feast lasted, Judg. xiv. 17. Christ and his disciples were but newly married, the bridegroom was yet with them, the nuptials were yet in the celebrating; Matthew's particularly; when the bridegroom should be removed from them, to the far country about his business, then would be a proper time to sit as a widow, in solitude and fasting.

2. That these were early days with them, and they were not so able for the severe exercises of religion, as hereafter they would be. The Pharisees had long accustomed themselves to such austerities; and John Baptist himself, neither eating nor drinking. His disciples from the first inured themselves to hardships, and came the easier to bear strict and frequent fasting, but it was not so with Christ's disciples; their Master came eating and drinking, and had not bred them up to the difficult services of religion as yet, for it was all in good time. To put them upon such frequent fasting at first, would be a discouragement to them, and perhaps drive them off from following Christ; would be of as ill consequence as putting new wine into old casks, or sowing new cloth to that which is worn thin, and thread-bare, ver. 21, 22. Note, God graciously considers the frame of young Christians, that are weak and tender, and so must we; nor must we expect more, but the work of the day in its day, and that day according to the strength, because it is not in our hands to give strength according to the day. Many contract an antipathy to some kind of food, otherwise good, by being surfeited with it when they are young; so, many entertain prejudices against the exercises of devotion by being burthened with them, and made to serve with an offering, at their setting out. Weak Christians must take heed of over-tasking themselves, and of making the yoke of Christ otherwise than as it is, easy, and sweet, and pleasant.

Secondly, He justifies them in plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, which, I will warrant you, a disciple of the Pharisees would not dare to have done; for it was contrary to an express tradition of their elders. In this instance, as in that before, they reflect upon the discipline of Christ's school, as if it were not so strict as that of theirs: so common it is for those that deny the power of godliness to be jealous for the form, and censorious of those who affect not their form.

Observe, 1. What a poor breakfast Christ's disciples had on a sabbath-day morning, when they were going to church, ver. 23. they



they *plucked the ears of corn*, and that was the best they had. They were so intent upon spiritual dainties, that they forgot even their *necessary food*; and the word of Christ was to them instead of that; and their zeal for it even *eat them up*. The Jews made it a piece of religion to eat dainty food on sabbath-days, but the disciples were content with any thing.

2. How even this was *grudged them* by the Pharisees, upon supposition that it was not lawful to *pluck the ears of corn* on the sabbath-day, that that was as much a servile work as *reaping*, ver. 24. *Why do they on the sabbath-day, that which is not lawful?* Note, If Christ's disciples do that which is unlawful, Christ will be reflected upon, and upbraided with it, as he was here, and dishonour will redound to his name. It is observable, that when the Pharisees thought Christ did amiss, they told the disciples, ver. 16. and now when they thought the disciples did amiss, they spoke to Christ; as make-bates, that did what they could to sow discord between Christ and his disciples; and make a breach in the family.

3. How Christ defended them in what they did:

1. By example. They had a good precedent for it in David's eating the *shew-bread*, when he was hungry, and there was no other bread to be had, ver. 25, 26. *Have ye never read?* Note, Many of our mistakes would be rectified, and our unjust censures of others corrected, if we would but recollect what *we have read* in the Scripture: appeals to that are most convincing. You have read that David, the man after God's own heart, when he was hungry, made no difficulty of eating the *shew-bread*, which by the law none might eat of, but the priests and their families. Note, Ritual observances must give way to moral obligations; and that may be done in a case of necessity, which otherwise may not be done. This it is said David did in the days of *Abiathar the high priest*; or, *just before* the days of Abiathar, who immediately succeeded Abimelech his father in the pontificate; and, it is probable, was at that time his father's deputy, or assistant in the office; and he it was that escaped the massacre, and brought the ephod to David.

2. By argument. To reconcile them to the disciples *plucking the ears of corn*, let them consider,

1. Whom the sabbath was made for, ver. 27. *It was made for man, and not man for the sabbath*. This we had not in Matthew. The sabbath is a sacred and divine institution, but we must receive and embrace it as a privilege and a benefit, not as a task and a drudgery. (1.) God never designed it to be an *imposition* upon us, and therefore we must not make it so to our selves; *man was not made for the sabbath*, for he was made a day before the sabbath was instituted. Man was made for God, and for his honour and service, and he must rather die than deny him; but he was not *made for the sabbath*, so as to be tied up by the law of it, from that which is necessary to the support of his life. (2.) God did design it to be an *advantage* to us, and so we must make it, and improve it. He made it for man. 1. He had *some* regard to our *bodies* in the institution, that they might rest, and not be tired out with the constant business of this world, Deut. v. 14. *That thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant may rest*. Now he that intended the *sabbath-rest* for the *repose* of our bodies, certainly never intended it should restrain us in a case of necessity, from fetching in the necessary *supports* of the body; it must be construed, so as not to contradict itself, for *edification*, and not for *destruction*. 2. He had *much more* regard to our *souls*; the sabbath was made a day of rest, only in order to its being a day of holy work, a day of communion with God, a day of praise and thanksgiving; and the rest from worldly business is therefore necessary, that we may closely apply our selves to this work, and spend the whole time in it, in publick, private, and secret; but then time is allowed us for that which is necessary to the fitting of our bodies, for the service of our souls in God's service; and the enabling of them to *keep pace* with them in that work. See here, (1.) What a *good Master* we serve, all whose institutions are for our own benefit, and if we be so wise as to observe them, we are *wise for our selves*; it is not he, but we that are gainers by our service. (2.) What we should aim at in our *sabbath-work*, even the good of our own souls. If the sabbath was made for man, we should then ask our selves at night, what am I the better for the sabbath-day? (3.) What care we ought to take not to make those exercises of religion, burthens to our selves or others, which God ordained to be blessings; not only not by unreasonable strictness added to the command, but not by indulging those corruptions which are adverse to the command, for thereby we make those devout exercises a penance to our selves, which otherwise would be a pleasure.

2. Who the sabbath was made by, ver. 28. *The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath*; and therefore he will not see the kind intentions of the institution of it frustrated by your impositions. Note, The sabbath-days are *days of the Son of man*; he is the Lord of the day, and to his honour it must be observed; by him God made the worlds, and so it was by him that the sabbath was first instituted; by him God gave the law at mount Sinai, and so the *fourth* commandment was *his law*; and that little alteration that was shortly to be made by the shifting of it, one day forward to the first day of the week, was to be in remem-

brance of his resurrection, and therefore the Christian sabbath was to be called the *Lords day*, Rev. i. 10. the Lord Christ's day; and the *Son of man*, Christ, as Mediator, is always to be looked upon as Lord of the sabbath. This argument he largely insists upon in his own justification, when he was charged with having broken the sabbath, John v. 16.

## C H A P. III.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Christ's healing the man that had a withered hand, on the sabbath-day, and the combination of his enemies against him for it, ver. 1—6. (2.) The universal resort of people to him from all parts to be healed, and the relief they all found with him, ver. 7—12. (3.) His ordaining his twelve apostles to be attendants on him, and the preachers of his gospel, ver. 13—21. (4.) His answer to the blasphemous cavil of the Scribes, who imputed his power to cast out devils, to a confederacy with the prince of the devils, ver. 22—30. (5.) His owning his disciples for his nearest and dearest relations, ver. 31—35.

1. **A**ND he entred again into the synagogue, and there was a man there which had a withered hand. 2. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath-day, that they might accuse him. 3. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, stand forth. 4. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? but they held their peace. 5. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 6. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him. 7. But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea, 8. And from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan, and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. 9. And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him, because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. 10. For he had healed many, insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. 11. And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. 12. And he straightly charged them, that they should not make him known.

Here, as before, we have our Lord Jesus busy at work in the *synagogue* first, and then by the *sea-side*, to teach us that his presence should not be confined either to the one or to the other; but wherever any are gathered together in his name, whether in the *synagogue*, or any where else, there is he in the midst of them. In every place where he records his name, he will meet his people and bless them; it is his will that men *pray every where*. Now here we have some account of what he did.

First, When he entered again into the *synagogue*, he improved the opportunity he had there of doing good, and having no doubt preached a sermon there, he wrought a miracle for the confirmation of it, or at least for the confirmation of this truth, that it is lawful to do good on the sabbath-day. We had the story, Mat. xii. 9.

1. The patient's case was piteous; he had a *withered hand*, by which he was disabled to work for his living, and those that are so, are the most proper objects of charity; let those be helped that cannot help themselves.

2. The spectators were very unkind both to the patient and to the physician, who instead of interceding for a poor neighbour, did what they could to hinder his cure. For they intimated, that if Christ cured him now on the sabbath-day, they would accuse him as a *sabbath-breaker*; it had been very unreasonable, if they should have opposed a physician or surgeon in helping any poor body in misery by ordinary methods; but much more absurd was it to oppose him, that cured without any labour, but by a word's speaking.

3. Christ dealt very fairly with the spectators, and dealt with them first, if possible to prevent the offence. (1.) He laboured to convince their judgment. He bid the man *stand forth*, ver. 3. that by the sight of him they might be moved with compassion towards



towards him, and might not for shame account his cure a crime. And then he appeals to their own consciences; tho' the thing *speaks itself*, yet he is pleased to *speake* it. *Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-days*, as I design to do, or to do evil, as you design to do? Whether is better to *save life* or to *kill*? What fairer question could he put? And yet because they saw it would turn against them, *they held their peace*. Note, Those are obstinate indeed in their infidelity, who when they can say nothing against a truth, will say nothing to it; and when they cannot resist, yet will not yield.

(2.) When they rebelled against the light he lamented their stubbornness, ver. 5. *He looked round about on them with anger*, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. The sin he had an eye to was the hardness of their hearts, their unsensibleness of the evidence of his miracles, and their inflexible resolution to persist in unbelief. We hear what is said amiss, and see what is done in unbelief. But Christ looks at the root of bitterness in the heart; the amiss, but Christ looks at the root of bitterness in the heart; the blindness and hardness of that. Observe, (1.) How he was provoked by the sin. He looked round upon them for they were so many, and had so placed themselves, that they surrounded him. And he looked with anger; it is likely, his anger appeared in his countenance; his anger was, like God's, without the least perturbation to himself, but not without great provocation from us. Note, The sin of sinners is very displeasing to Jesus Christ; and the way to be angry and not to sin, is to be angry, as Christ was, at nothing but sin. Let hard-hearted sinners tremble, to think of the anger with which he will look round upon them shortly, when the great day of his wrath comes. (2.) How he pitied the sinners; he was grieved for the hardness of their hearts; as God was grieved forty years for the hardness of the hearts of their fathers in the wilderness; Note, It is a great grief to our Lord Jesus to see sinners bent upon their own ruin; and obstinately set against the methods of their conviction and recovery, for he would not that any should perish. This is a good reason, why the hardness of our own hearts, and of the hearts of others, should be a grief to us.

4. Christ dealt very kindly with the patient. He bid him stretch forth his hand, and it was immediately restored. Now, (1.) Christ has hereby taught us to go on with resolution in the way of our duty, how violent soever the opposition is, that we meet with in it. We must deny our selves sometimes in our ease, pleasure, and convenience, rather than give offence even to those who causelessly take it, but we must not deny our selves the satisfaction of serving God and doing good, tho' offence may unjustly be taken at it. None could be more tender of giving offence than Christ; yet rather than send this poor man away uncured, he would venture offending all the Scribes and Pharisees that compassed him about. (2.) He hath hereby given us a specimen of the cures wrought by his grace upon poor souls; our hands are spiritually withered; the powers of our souls weakened by sin, and disabled for that which is good. The great healing day is the sabbath, and the healing place the synagogue; the healing power is that of Christ. The gospel command is like this here; and the command as rational and just as this; tho' our hands are withered, and we cannot of our selves stretch them forth, we must attempt it, must as well as we can lift them up to God in prayer, lay hold on Christ, and eternal life, and employ them in good works; and if we do our endeavour, power goes along with the word of Christ, he effects the cure. Tho' our hands be withered, yet if we will not offer to stretch them out; it is our own fault that we are not healed; but if we do, and are healed, Christ, and his power and grace, must have all the glory.

5. The enemies of Christ dealt very barbarously with him. Such a work of mercy should have engaged their love to him, and such a work of wonder their faith in him. But instead of that, the Pharisees that pretended to be oracles in the church, and the Herodians that pretended to be the supporters of the state, tho' of opposite interests one to another, yet took counsel together against him, how they might destroy him. Note, They that suffer for doing good, do but suffer as their Master did.

Secondly, When he withdrew to the sea, he did good there. Whilst his enemies sought to destroy him, he quitted the place, to teach us in troublous times to shift for our own safety; but, see here,

1. How he was followed into his retirement. When some had such an enmity to him, that they drove him out of their country, others had such a value for him, that they followed him wherever he went; and the enmity of their leaders to Christ, did not cool their respects to him. Great multitudes followed him from all parts of the nation; as far north, as from Galilee; as far south, as from Judea and Jerusalem; nay, and from Idumea; as far east, as from beyond Jordan; and west, as from about Tyre and Sidon, ver. 7, 8. Observe, (1.) What induced them to follow him; it was the report they had of the great things he did for all that applied themselves to him; some wished to see one that had done such great things, and others hoped he would do great things for them. Note, The consideration of the great things Christ has done, should engage us to come to him. (2.) What they followed him for, ver. 10. They pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. Dis-

eases are here called plagues, *μολυσμα*, corrections, chastisements. So they are designed to be, to make us smart for our sins; that thereby we may be made sorry for them, and may be warned not to return to them. Those that were under these scourgings came to Jesus; this is the errand on which sickness is sent, to quicken us to enquire after Christ, and apply ourselves to him as our physician. They pressed upon him, each striving which should get nearest him, and which should be first served. They fell down before him, so Dr. Hammond, as petitioners for his favour; they desired leave but to touch him, having faith to be healed, not only by his touching them, but by their touching him; which no doubt, they had many instances of. (3.) What provision he made to be ready to attend them, ver. 9. he spake to his disciples, who were fishermen, and had fisher-boats at command, that a small ship should constantly wait on him, to carry him from place to place on the same coast, that when he had dispatched the necessary business he had to do in one place, he might easily remove to another, where his presence was requisite, without pressing thro' the crowds of people that followed him for curiosity. Wise men, as much as they can, decline a crowd.

2. What abundance of good he did in his retirement; he did not withdraw to be idle, nor did he send back those who rudely crowded after him when he withdrew, but took it kindly, and gave them what they came for; for he never said to any that sought him diligently, *seek ye me in vain*. (1.) Diseases were effectually cured. He healed many; divers sorts of patients, ill of divers sorts of diseases, tho' numerous, tho' various, he healed them. (2.) Devils were effectually conquered. Those whom unclean spirits had got possession of, when they saw him, trembled at his presence, and they also fell down before him, not to supplicate his favour, but to deprecate his wrath, and by their own terrors were compelled to own, that he was the Son of God, ver. 11. It is sad that this great truth should be denied by any of the children of men, who may have the benefit of it, when a confession of it has so often been extorted from devils, who are excluded from having benefit by it. (3.) Christ sought not applause to himself in doing those great things, for he strictly charged those for whom he did them, that they should not make him known, ver. 12. That they should not be industrious to spread the notice of his cures, as it were by advertisements in the news-papers, but let them leave his own works to praise him, and let the report of them diffuse itself, and make its own way. Let not those that were cured be forward to divulge it, lest it should feed their pride, who were so highly favoured, but let the standers-by carry away the intelligence of it. When we do that which is praise-worthy, and yet covet not to be praised of men for it, then the same mind is in us, which was in Christ Jesus.

13. And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. 14. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach: 15. And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils. 16. And Simon he surnamed Peter. 17. And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, the sons of thunder) 18. And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite, 19. And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house. 20. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. 21. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

In these verses we have,

First, The choice Christ made of the twelve apostles to be his constant followers and attendants, and to be sent abroad as there was occasion to preach the gospel. Observe,

1. The introduction to this call, or promotion of disciples. He goes up into a mountain, and his errand thither was to pray. Ministers must be set apart with solemn prayer, for the pouring out of the Spirit upon them; tho' Christ had authority to confer the gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet to set us an example, he prayed for them.

2. The rule he went by in his choice, and that was his own good pleasure; he called unto him whom he would. Not such as we would have thought fittest to be called, looking upon the countenance and the height of the stature: but such as he thought fit to call, and determined to make fit for the service to which he called them: even so, blessed Jesus, because it seemed good in thine eyes. Christ calls whom he will, for he is a free agent, and his grace is his own.

3. The efficacy of the call. He called them, to separate themselves from the crowd, and stand by him, and they came unto him; Christ calls those who were given him, John xvii. 6. and



all that the Father gave him, shall come to him, John vi. 37. Those whom it was his will to call, he made willing to come; his people shall be willing in the day of his power. Perhaps they came to him readily enough, because they were in expectation of reigning with him in temporal pomp and power, but when afterwards they were undeceived in that matter, yet they had such a prospect given them of better things, that they would not say they were deceived in their Master, nor repented their leaving all to be with him.

4. The end and intention of this call; he ordained them (probably by the imposition of hands, which was a ceremony used among the Jews) that they should be with him constantly, to be witnesses of his doctrine, manner of life, and patience, that they might fully know it, and be able to give an account of it; and especially that they might attest the truth of his miracles; they must be with him, to receive instructions from him, that they might be qualified to give instruction to others. It would require time to fit them for that which he designed them for; for they must be sent forth to preach; not to preach till they were sent, and not to be sent, till by a long and intimate acquaintance with Christ, they were fitted. Note, Christ's ministers must be much with him.

5. The power he gave them to work miracles; and hereby he put a very great honour upon them, beyond that of the great men of the earth. He ordained them to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils. They shewed that the power which Christ had to work these miracles, was an original power; that he had it not as a servant, but as a son in his own house, in that he could confer it upon others, and invest them with it: they have a rule in the law, *deputatus non potest deputare*, he that is only deputed himself, cannot depute another; but our Lord Jesus had life in himself, and the Spirit without measure, for he could give this power even to the weak and foolish things of the world.

6. Their number and names; he ordained twelve, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. They are here named not just in the same order as they were in Matthew, nor by couples as they were there; but as there, so here Peter is put first, and Judas last. Here Matthew is put before Thomas; it is likely, being called in that order, but in that catalogue which Matthew himself drew up, he puts himself after Thomas; so far was he from insisting upon the precedence of his consecration. But that which Mark only takes notice of in this list of the apostles is, that Christ called James and John Boanerges, which is, *The sons of thunder*; perhaps they were remarkable for a loud commanding voice, they were thundering preachers; or rather, it notes the zeal and fervency of their spirits, which would make them active for God above their brethren. These two (saith Dr. Hammond) were to be special eminent ministers of the gospel, which is called *a voice shaking the earth*, Heb. xii. 26. Yet John, one of those sons of thunder, was full of love and tenderness, as appears by his epistles, and was the beloved disciple.

7. Their retirement with their Master, and close adherence to him, they went into an house. Now this jury was impanelled, they stood together to hearken to their evidence. They went together into the house, to settle the orders of their infant college, and now, it is likely, the bag was given to Judas, which pleased him, and made him easy.

Secondly, The continual crowds that attended Christ's motions, ver. 20. The multitude cometh together again unsent for, and unseasonably, pressing upon him, some with one errand, and some with another; so that he and his disciples could not get time so much as to eat bread, much less for a set and full meal. Yet he did not shut his doors against the petitioners, but bid them welcome, and gave to each of them an answer of peace. Note, They whose hearts are enlarged in the work of God, can easily bear with great inconveniences to themselves in the prosecution of it, and will rather lose a meal's meat at any time, than slip an opportunity of doing good. It is happy when zealous hearers and zealous preachers thus meet, and encourage one another. Now the kingdom of God was preached, and men pressed into it, Luke xvi. 16. This was a gale of opportunity worth improving, and the disciples might well afford to adjourn their meals to lay hold on it. It is good striking while the iron is hot.

Thirdly, The care of his relations concerning him, ver. 21. When his friends in Capernaum heard how he was followed, and what pains he took, they went out to lay hold on him, and fetch him home, for they said, He is beside himself. (1.) Some understand it of an absurd, preposterous care, which had more in it of reproach to him, than of respect; and so we must take it as we read it, he is beside himself; either they suspected it themselves, or it was suggested to them, and they gave credit to the suggestion that he was gone distracted, and therefore his friends ought to bind him, and put him in a dark room, to bring him to his right mind again. His kindred, many of them, had mean thoughts of him, Job. vi. 4. vii. 5. and were willing to hearken to this ill construction which some put upon his great zeal, and to conclude him crazed in his intellectuals, and, under that pretence, to take him off from his work. The prophets were called mad fellows, 2 Kings ix. 11. (2.) Others understand it of a

well-meaning care, and then they read *ἐξῆς, he fainteth*; he has no time to eat bread, and therefore his strength will fail him; he will be stifled with the crowd of people, and will have his spirits quite exhausted with constant speaking, and the virtue that goes out of him in his miracles; and therefore let us use a friendly violence with him, and get him a little breathing-time. In his preaching-work, as well as his suffering-work, he was attacked with, *Master, spare thy self*. Note, They who go on with vigour and zeal in the work of God, must expect to meet with hindrances, both from the groundless disaffection of their enemies, and the mistaken affections of their friends, and they have need to stand upon their guard against both.

22. ¶ And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem, said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. 23. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24. And if a kingdom be divided against it self, that kingdom cannot stand. 25. And if a house be divided against it self, that house cannot stand. 26. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. 27. No man can enter into a strong mans house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house. 28. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: 29. But he that shall blaspheme against the holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: 30. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Here is, 1. The impudent, impious brand which the Scribes fastened upon Christ's casting out devils, that they might evade and invalidate the conviction of it, and have a poor excuse for not yielding to it. These scribes came down from Jerusalem, ver. 22. It should seem, they came this long journey on purpose to hinder the progress of the doctrine of Christ: such pains did they take to do mischief; and coming from Jerusalem, where were the most polite and learned Scribes, and where they had opportunity of consulting together against the Lord and his anointed, they were in the greater capacity to do mischief; the reputation of Scribes from Jerusalem, would have an influence not only upon the country people, but upon the country Scribes; they had never thought of this base suggestion concerning Christ's miracles, till the Scribes from Jerusalem put it in their heads. They could not deny but that he cast out devils, which plainly spoke him sent of God; but they insinuated he had Beelzebub on his side, was in league with him, and by the prince of the devils cast out devils. There is a trick in the case; Satan is not cast out, he only goes out by consent. There was nothing in the manner of Christ's casting out devils, that gave any cause to suspect this; he did it as one having authority; but so they will have it, who resolve not to believe him.

2. The rational answer which Christ gave to this objection, demonstrating the absurdity of it.

(1.) Satan is so subtle that he will never voluntarily quit his possession. If Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom is divided against it self, and it cannot stand, ver. 23, 24, 25. He called them to him, as one desirous they should be convinced, he treats them with all the freedom, friendliness, and familiarity, that could be; he vouchsafes to reason the case with them, that every mouth may be stopped. It was plain that the doctrine of Christ made war upon the devil's kingdom, and had a direct tendency to break his power, and crush his interest in the souls of men; and it was as plain that the casting of him out of the bodies of people confirmed that doctrine, and gave it the setting on; and therefore it cannot be imagined that he should come into such a design; every one knows Satan is no fool, nor will act so directly against his own interest.

(2.) Christ is so wise, that, being engaged in war with him, he will attack his forces wherever he meets them, whether in the bodies or souls of people, ver. 27. It is plain, Christ's design is to enter into the strong man's house, to take possession of the interest he has in the world, and to spoil his goods, and convert them to his own service, and therefore it is natural to suppose that he will thus bind the strong man; will forbid him to speak when he would, and to stay, where he would, and thus shew that he has gained a victory over him.

3. The awful warning Christ gave them to take heed how they spoke such dangerous words as these; however they might make light of them, as only conjectures and the language of free-thinking, if they persisted in it, it would be of fatal consequence to them; it would be found a sin against the last remedy, and consequently unpardonable; for what could be imagined possible to bring them to repentance for their sin in blaspheming Christ, that would set aside such a strong conviction with such a weak evasion. It is true, the gospel promiseth, because Christ hath purchased



*purchased forgiveness for the greatest sins and sinners, ver. 28. Those who reviled Christ on the cross, which was a blaspheming of the Son of man, aggravated to the highest degree, yet many of them found mercy, and Christ himself prayed, Father, forgive them; but this was blaspheming the Holy Ghost, for it was by the holy Spirit that he cast out devils, and they said, it was by the unclean spirit, ver. 30. And by this method they would out-face the conviction of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost after Christ's ascension, and defeat them all, after which there remained no more proof, and therefore they should never have forgiveness, but were liable to eternal damnation. They were in imminent danger of that everlasting punishment, from which there was no redemption, and in which there was no intermission, no remission.*

31. ¶ There came then his brethren and his mother, and standing without, sent unto him, calling him. 32. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. 33. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? 34. And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren. 35. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Here is, 1. The *disrespect* which Christ's kindred, according to the flesh, shewed to him, when he was preaching, (and they knew very well that he was then in his element) they not only stood without, having no desire to come in and hear him, but they sent in a message to call him out to them, ver. 31, 32. as if he must leave his work to hearken to their *impertinences*; it is likely, they had no business with him, only sent for him on purpose to oblige him to break off, lest he should kill himself. He knew how far his strength would go, and preferred the salvation of souls before his own life, and soon after made it to appear with a witness; it was therefore an idle thing for them, under pretence of his sparing himself to interrupt him; and it was worse, if really they had business with him, when they knew he preferred his business as a Saviour, so much before any other business.

2. The *respect* which Christ shewed to his spiritual kindred upon this occasion. Now as at other times, he put a comparative neglect upon his mother, which seemed purposely designed, to obviate and prevent the extravagant respect, which men in after times would be apt to pay her. Our respects ought to be guided and governed by Christ; now the virgin Mary, or Christ's mother, is not equalled with, but postponed to ordinary believers, on whom Christ here puts a *surperlative* honour. He looked upon those who sat about him, and pronounced those of them that not only heard, but did the will of God, to be to him as his brother, and sister, and mother; as much esteemed, loved, and cared for, as his nearest relations, ver. 33, 34, 35. This is a good reason why we should honour those that fear the Lord, and chuse them for our people; why we should be not hearers of the word only, but doers of the work, that we may share with the saints in this honour. Surely it is good to be a-kin to those who are thus nearly allied to Christ, and to have fellowship with those that have fellowship with Christ; and wo to those who hate and persecute Christ's kindred, that are his bone and his flesh, every one resembling the children of a king, see Jud. viii. 18, 19. for he will with jealousy plead their cause, and avenge their blood.

#### C H A P. IV.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The parable of the seed, and the four sorts of ground, ver. 1—9. with the exposition of it, ver. 10—20. and the application of it, ver. 21—25. (2.) The parable of the seed growing gradually, but insensibly, ver. 26—29. (3.) The parable of the grain of mustard seed, and a general account of Christ's parables, ver. 30—34. (4.) The miracle of Christ's sudden stilling a storm at sea, ver. 35—41.

1. AND he began again to teach by the sea-side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entred into a ship, and sat in the sea: and the whole multitude was by the sea, on the land. 2. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, 3. Hearken, Behold, there went out a sower to sow: 4. And it came to pass as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. 5. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth, and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth. 6. But when the sun was up, it

was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away. 7. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up, and increased, and brought forth some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. 9. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. 10. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve, asked of him the parable. 11. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: 12. That seeing they may see, and not perceive, and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. 13. And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? 14. ¶ The sower soweth the word. 15. And these are they by the way-side, where the word is sown: but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. 16. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground, who when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness: 17. And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward when affliction or persecution ariseth for the words sake, immediately they are offended. 18. And these are they which are sown among thorns: such as hear the word, 19. And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entring in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. 20. And these are they which are sown on good ground, such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

The foregoing chapter began with Christ's entering into the synagogue, ver. 1. This chapter begins with Christ's teaching again by the sea-side. Thus he changed his method, that, if possible, all might be reached and wrought upon. To gratify the nice and more genteel sort of people, that had seats, chief seats in the synagogue, and did not care for hearing a sermon any where else, he did not preach always by the sea side, but having liberty, went oft in the synagogue, and taught there; yet to gratify the poor, the mob, that could not get room in the synagogue, he did not always preach there, but began again to teach by the sea-side, where they could come within hearing. Thus are we debtors both to the wise and to the unwise, Rom. i. 14.

Here seems to be a new convenience found out, which had not been used before, tho' he had before preached by the sea-side, chap. ii. 13. and that was his standing in a ship, while his hearers stood upon the land, and that inland sea of Tiberias having no tide, there was no ebbing and flowing of the waters to disturb them. Methinks Christ's carrying his doctrine into a ship, and preaching it thence, was a presage of his sending of the gospel to the isles of the Gentiles, and the shipping off of the kingdom of God, (that rich cargo) from the Jewish nation, to be sent to a people that would bring forth more of the fruits of it. Now observe here,

1. The way of teaching that Christ used with the multitude, ver. 2. He taught them many things, but it was by parables, or similitudes, which would tempt them to hear, for people love to be spoken to in their own language, and careless hearers will catch at a plain comparison, borrowed from common things, and will retain and repeat that when they have lost, and perhaps never took, the truth, which it was designed to explain and illustrate: But unless they would take pains to search into it, it would but amuse them, seeing they would see, and not perceive, ver. 12. and so while it gratified their curiosity, it was the punishment of their stupidity; they wilfully shut their eyes against the light, and therefore justly did Christ put it into the dark lanthorn of a parable, which had a bright side towards those who applied it to themselves, and were willing to be guided by it; but to those who were only willing for a season to play with it, it only gave a flash of light now and then, but sent them away in the dark. It is just with God to say of those that will not see, that they shall not see, and to hide from their eyes, who only look about them with a great deal of carelessness, and never look before them with any concern upon the things that belong to their peace.

2. The way of expounding that he used with his disciples. When he was alone by himself, not only the twelve, but others that were about him with the twelve, took the opportunity to ask him the meaning of the parables, ver. 10. They found it good to be about Christ; the nearer him the better; good to be with the twelve, to be conversant with those that are intimate with him: And he told them what a distinguishing favour it was to them, that they were made acquainted with the mystery of the kingdom of God, ver. 11. The secret of the Lord was with them. That



*instructed* them which others were only *amused* with, and they were made to increase in knowledge by every parable, and understood more of the way and method in which Christ designed to set up his kingdom in the world, while others were dismissed never the wiser. Note, Those who know the *mystery* of the *kingdom of heaven*, must acknowledge that it is *given to them*; they receive both the light and the sight from Jesus Christ, who, after his resurrection, both *opened the scriptures*, and *opened the understanding*, Luke xxiv. 27—45.

In particular, we have here,

1. The parable of the sower, as we had it, *Matt. xiii. 3, &c.* He begins, *ver. 3.* with *harken*, and concludes, *ver. 9.* with *he that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. Note, The words of Christ demand attention, and those who speak from him may command it, and should stir it up; even that, which as yet we do not *thoroughly* understand, or not *rightly*, yet we must carefully attend to, believing it to be both intelligible and weighty, that at length we may understand it; we shall find more in Christ's sayings than at first there seemed to be.

2. The exposition of it to the disciples. Here is a question Christ put to them before he expounded it, which we had not in Matthew, *ver. 13.* *Know ye not this parable?* Know ye not the meaning of it? *How then will ye know all parables?* (1.) If ye know not this which is so plain, how will ye understand other parables that will be more dark and obscure? If you are gravelled, and run aground with this which speaks so plainly, the different success of the word preached upon those that hear it, which you your selves may see easily, how will you understand the parables which hereafter will speak of the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, which is a thing you have yet no idea of? Note, This should quicken us both to prayer and pains that we may get knowledge, that there are a great many things we are concerned to know; and if we understand not the plain truths of the gospel, how shall we master those that are more difficult? *Vita brevis, ars longa.* If we have run with the footmen, and they have wearied us, and run us down, then how shall we contend with horses? Jer. xii. 5. (2.) If you know not this which is intended for your direction in hearing the word, that ye may profit by it; how shall ye profit by what you are further to hear? This parable is to teach you to be attentive to the word, and affected with it, that you may *understand* it. If you receive not this, you will not know how to use the key by which you must be let into all the rest. If we understand not the rules we are to observe in order to our profiting by the word, how shall we profit by any other rules? Observe, Before Christ expounds the parable, (1.) He shews them how sad their case was, who were not let into the meaning of the doctrine of Christ. *To you it is given, but not to them.* Note, It will help us to put a value upon the privileges we enjoy as disciples of Christ; to consider the deplorable state of those who want such privileges; especially that they are out of the ordinary way of conversion, *lest they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them*, *ver. 12.* Those only who are *converted* have *their sins forgiven them*: And it is the misery of *unconverted* souls, that they lie under *unpardoned* guilt. (2.) He shews them what a shame it was, that they needed such particular explanations of the word they heard, and did not apprehend it at first. Those that would improve in knowledge must be made sensible of their ignorance.

Having thus prepared them for it, he gives them the reddition of the parable of the sower, as we had it before in Matthew. Let us only observe here,

1. That in the great field of the church, the word of God is dispensed to all promiscuously. *The sower soweth the word*, *ver. 14.* sows it at a venture, *beside all waters*, upon all sorts of ground, *Isa. xxxii. 20.* not knowing where it will light, or what fruit it will bring forth. He *scatters* it in order to the *increase* of it. Christ was a while *sowing* himself, when he went about teaching and preaching; now he sends his ministers, and sows by their hand: Ministers are sowers; they have need of the skill and discretion of the husbandmen, *Isa. xxviii. 24—26.* they must not observe winds and clouds, *Eccl. xi. 4, 6.* and must look up to God, who *gives seed to the sower*, *2 Cor. ix. 10.*

2. That of the many that hear the word of the gospel, and read it, and are conversant with it, there are, comparatively, but few that receive it, so as to bring forth the fruits of it; here is but one in four that comes to good. It is sad to think, how much of the precious seed of the word of God is lost, and *sown in vain*; but there is a day coming when *lost sermons* must be accounted for: Many that have heard Christ himself *preach in their streets*, yet will hereafter be bidden to depart from him; those therefore who place all their religion in hearing, as if that alone would save them, do but deceive themselves, and build their hope upon the sand, *Jam. i. 22.*

3. Many are much affected with the word for the present, that yet receive no abiding benefit by it. The motions of soul they have, answerable to what they hear, are but a meer flash, like the crackling of thorns under a pot. We read of hypocrites, that *delight to know God's ways*, *Isa. lviii. 2.* of Herod, that he heard John gladly, *Mark vi. 20.* and of others, that they *rejoiced in his light*, *John v. 35.* and of those to whom Ezekiel was a *lovely song*, *Ezek. xxxii. 32.* and those represented here by the stony

ground, received the word *with gladness*, and yet came to no thing.

4. The reason why the word doth not leave commanding, abiding, impressions upon the minds of people, is because their hearts are not duly disposed and prepared to receive it: the fault is in themselves, not in the word; some are careless forgetful hearers, and these get *no good at all* by the word; it comes in at one ear, and goes out at the other; others have their convictions over-powered by their corruptions, and they lose the good impressions the word has made upon them, so that they get no *abiding* good by it.

5. The devil is very busy about loose, careless, hearers; as the fowls of the air go about the seed that lies above ground; when the heart, like the *highway*, is unplowed, unhumbled, when it *lies common*, to be trodden on by every passenger, as theirs that are great company-keepers, then the devil is *like the fowls*, he comes swiftly and carries away the word ere we are aware: When therefore these fowls come down upon the sacrifices, we should take care, as *Abram* did, to *drive them away*, *Gen. xv. 21.* that tho' we cannot keep them from hovering over our heads, we may not let them nestle in our hearts.

6. Many that are not openly *scandalized*, so as to throw off their profession, as they on the stony ground did, yet have the efficacy of it secretly *choked* and stifled, so that it comes to nothing; they continue in a barren, hypocritical profession, which brings nothing to pass, and so go down as certainly, though more plausibly, to hell.

7. Impressions that are not *deep*, will not be *durable*, but will wear off in suffering, trying, times; like footsteps on the sand of the sea, which are gone the next high tide of persecution; when *that iniquity* doth abound, the love of many to the ways of God waxeth cold; many that keep their profession in fair days, lose it in a storm; and do as those that go to sea only for pleasure, come back again when the wind rises. It is the ruin of hypocrites that they *have no root*; they do not act from a living fixed principle; they do not mind *heart-work*, and without that, religion is nothing; for he is the Christian, that is *one inwardly*.

8. Many are hindered from profiting by the word of God, by their abundance of the world: Many a good lesson of humility, charity, self-denial, and heavenly mindedness is choked and lost by that prevailing complacency in the world, which they are apt to have, on whom it smiles. Thus many professors, that otherwise might have come to something, prove like *Pharaoh's lean kine* and *thin ears*.

9. Those that are not encumbered with the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, yet may lose the benefit of their profession by the *lusts of other things*; this is added here in Mark, *by the desires which are about other things*; so Dr. Hammond: an inordinate appetite towards those things that are pleasing to sense, or to the fancy. Those that have but little of the world, may yet be ruined by an indulgence of the body.

10. Fruit is the thing that God expects and requires from those that enjoy the gospel: fruit according to the *seed*; a temper of mind and a course of life agreeable to the gospel; Christian graces daily exercised, Christian duties duly performed. This is *fruit* and it will abound to our account.

Lastly, No good fruit is to be expected but from good seed. If the seed be sown on *good ground*; if the heart be humble, and holy, and heavenly, there will be *good fruit*, and it will *abound*; sometimes even to an *hundred fold*, such a crop as *Isaac* reaped, *Gen. xxvi. 12.*

21. ¶ And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? 22. For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested: neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. 23. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. 24. And he said unto them, Take heed what you hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. 25. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath. 26. ¶ And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, 27. And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. 28. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of her self, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. 29. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. 30. ¶ And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? 31. It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth. 32. But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it. 33. And with many such



such parables spake he the word unto them as they were able to hear it. 34. But without a parable spake he not unto them, and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

The lessons which our Saviour designs to teach us here by parables and figurative expressions are these,

First, That those that *are good*, ought to consider the obligations they are under to *do good*; that is, as in the parable before, to *bring forth fruit*. God expects a grateful return of his gifts to us, and a useful improvement of his gifts in us; for, *ver. 21. Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?* No, but that it may be *set on a candlestick*. The apostles were ordained to receive the gospel, not for themselves only, but for the good of others, to communicate it to them. All Christians, as they have *received the gift*, must *minister the same*. Note, (1.) Gifts and graces make a man *as a candle*; the *candle of the Lord*, Prov. xx. 27. lighted by the Father of lights; the most eminent are but candles, poor lights, compared with the *Sun of righteousness*. A candle gives light but a *little way*, and but a *little while*, and is easily blown out, and continually burning down and wasting. (2.) Many that are *lighted* as candles, put themselves *under a bed*, or *under a bushel*: they do not *manifest* grace themselves, nor *minister* grace to others; they have estates, and do no good with them; have their limbs and senses, wit and learning, perhaps, but no body is the better for them: they have spiritual gifts, but do not use them; like a taper in an urn, they burn to themselves. (3.) Those who are *lighted* as candles, should set themselves *on a candlestick*; that is, should improve all opportunities of doing good, as those that were made for the glory of God, and the service of the communities they are members of; we are not born for our selves.

And the reason given for this, is, because *there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested*, which *should not* be made manifest, so it might better be read, *ver. 22.* There is no treasure of gifts and graces lodged in any but with design to be communicated; nor was the gospel made a *secret* to the apostles to be concealed, but that it should *come abroad* and be divulged to all the world. Though Christ expounded the parables to his disciples privately, yet it was with design to make them the more publicly useful; they were taught that they might teach; and it is a general rule, that *the ministration of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*, not himself only, but others also.

Secondly, It concerns those who hear the word of the gospel to *mark* what they hear, and to *make a good use* of it, because their *weal* or *wo* depends upon it; what he had said before he saith again, *If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear*, *ver. 23.* Let him give the gospel of Christ a fair hearing; but that is not enough, it is added, *ver. 24. Take heed what you hear*, and give a due regard to that which you do hear, *consider what you hear*, so Dr. Hammond reads it. Note, What we hear doth us no good unless we consider it; those especially that are to teach others, must themselves be very observant of the things of God; must take notice of the message they are to deliver, that they may be exact. We must likewise *take heed what we hear*, by *proving* all things, that we may *hold fast that which is good*: We must be cautious and stand upon our guard, lest we be imposed upon. To enforce this caution, consider,

1. As we deal with God, God will deal with us. So Dr. Hammond explains these words, *with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you*. If you be faithful servants to him, he will be a faithful master to you: *with the upright he will shew himself upright*.

2. As we improve the talents we are intrusted with, we shall increase them; if we make use of the knowledge we have for the glory of God, and the benefit of others, it shall sensibly grow as stock in trade doth by being turned. *Unto you that hear, shall more be given; to you that have, it shall be given*, *ver. 25.* If the disciples deliver that to the church which they have *received of the Lord*, they shall be *led more into the secret of the Lord*. Gifts and graces multiply by being exercised; and God has promised to *bless the hand of the diligent*.

3. If we do not *use* we *lose* what we have, *from him that hath*, not, that doth no good with what he has, and so has it in vain, is as if he had it not, *shall be taken even that he has*. Burying a talent is the betraying of a trust, and amounts to a forfeiture; and gifts and graces *rust* for want of *wearing*.

Thirdly, The good seed of the gospel sown in the world, and sown in the heart, doth by degrees produce wonderful effects, but without noise, *ver. 26, &c.* So is the kingdom of God; so is the gospel, when it is sown, and received as seed in good ground.

(1.) It will *come up*; though it seem lost and buried under the clouds, it will find or make its way through them. The seed *cast into the ground will spring*. Let but the word of Christ have the place it ought to have in a soul, and it will shew itself, as the *wisdom from above* doth in a *good conversation*. After a field is sown with corn, how soon is the surface of it altered, how gay and pleasant doth it look when it is covered with green?

(2.) The husbandman cannot describe how it comes up; it is one of the mysteries of nature; it *springs and grows up he knows not how*, *ver. 27.* He sees it has grown, but he cannot tell in

what manner it grew, or what was the cause and method of its growth. Thus we know not how the Spirit by the word makes a change in the heart, no more than we can account for the blowing of the wind which we hear the sound of, but cannot tell whence it comes, or whither it goes. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; how *God manifested in the flesh*, came to be *believed on in the world*, 1 Tim. iii. 16.

(3.) The husbandman when he hath sown the seed, doth nothing towards the springing of it up. *He sleeps and rises night and day*; goes to sleep *at night*, gets up *in the morning*, and perhaps never so much as thinks of the corn he hath sown, or ever looks upon it, but follows his pleasures or other business, and yet *the earth brings forth fruit of itself*, according to the ordinary course of nature, and by the concurring power of the God of nature. Thus the *word of grace*, when it is received in faith, is in the heart a *work of grace*, and the preachers contribute nothing to it. The Spirit of God is carrying it on when *they sleep*, and can do no business, *Job xxxiii. 15, 16.* or when they *rise* to go about other business. The prophets do not *live for ever*, but the word which they preached is doing its work, when they are in their graves; *Zech. i. 5, 6.* The dew by which the seed is brought up *tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men*, Mic. v. 7.

(4.) It grows gradually, *first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear*, *ver. 28.* When it is sprung up, it will go forward, nature will have its course, and so will grace; Christ's interest, both in the world, and in the heart, is, and will be, a *growing* interest; and though *the beginning be small, the latter end will greatly increase*. Though thou sowest not that body that shall be, but *bare grain*, yet God will give to every seed its own body; though at first it is but a tender blade, which the frost may nip, or the foot may crush, yet it will increase to *the ear*, to the *full corn in the ear*. *Natura nil facit per saltum*. God carries on his work insensibly, and without noise, but insuperably, and without fail.

(5.) It comes to perfection at last, *ver. 29. When the fruit is brought forth*, i. e. when it is ripe, and ready to be delivered into the owner's hand; then he *puts in the sickle*. This intimates, (1.) That Christ now accepts the services which are done to him by an honest heart from a good principle; from the fruit of the gospel taking place and working in the soul: Christ *gathers in a harvest* of honour to himself. See *John iv. 35.* (2.) That he will reward them in eternal life. When those that receive the gospel aright, have finished their course, the harvest comes when they shall be gathered as *wheat into God's barn*, Matt. xiii. 30. as a *shock of corn in his season*.

Fourthly, The work of grace is small in its beginnings, but comes to be great and considerable at last, *ver. 30, 31, 32. Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God*, as now to be set up by the Messiah? How shall I make you to understand the designed method of it? Christ speaks as one considering, and consulting with himself, how to illustrate it with an apt similitude. *With what comparison shall we compare it?* Shall we fetch it from the motions of the sun, or the revolutions of the moon? No, the comparison is borrowed from this earth, it is *like a grain of mustard-seed*; he had compared it before to *seed sown*, here to *that seed*, intending thereby to shew,

1. That the beginnings of the *gospel kingdom* would be very small, like that which is *one of the least of all seeds*. When a Christian church was *sown in the earth* for God, it was all contained in one room, and the number of the names was but 120, *Acts i. 15.* as the children of Israel when they went down into Egypt were but seventy souls. The work of grace in the soul, is at first but the *day of small things*; a *cloud no bigger than a man's hand*. Never were there such great things undertaken by such an inconsiderable handful, as that of the discipling of the nations by the ministry of the apostles; nor a work that was to end in such great glory, as the work of grace raised from such weak and unlikely beginnings. *Who hath begotten me these?*

2. That the perfection of it will be very great. *When it grows up, it becomes greater than all herbs*. The gospel kingdom in the world, shall increase, and spread to the remotest nations of the earth, and shall continue to the latest ages of time. The church hath *shot out great branches*, strong ones, spreading far, and fruitful. The *work of grace* in the soul has mighty products, now while it is in its growth: But what will it be, when it is perfected in heaven? The difference between a *grain of mustard-seed*, and a *great tree*, is nothing to that between a *young convert* on earth, and a *glorified saint* in heaven. See *John xii. 24.*

After these parables thus instanced in, the historian concludes with this general account of Christ's preaching, that *with many such parables he spake the word unto them*, *ver. 33.* probably designing to refer us to the larger account of the parables of this kind, which we had before, *Matt. xiii.* He spake in parables, *as they were able to hear them*; he fetched his comparisons from those things that were familiar to them; and level to their capacity, and delivered them in plain expressions, in condescension to their capacity; though he did not let them into the *mystery* of the parables, yet his manner of expression was easy, and such as they might hereafter recollect to their edification. But for the present, *without a parable spake he not unto them*, *ver. 34.* The glory of the Lord was covered with a cloud, and God speaks to us in the



language of the *sons of men*, that though not *at first*, yet, by *degrees*, we may understand his meaning; the disciples themselves understood those sayings of Christ afterwards, which at first they did not rightly take the sense of. But these parables he *expounded to them, when they were alone*. We cannot but wish we had had that exposition, as we had of the parable of the sower; but it was not so needful; because, when the church should be enlarged, that would *expound* these parables to us, without any more ado.

35. And the same day when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. 36. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship, and there were also with him other little ships. 37. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? 39. And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still: and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that you have no faith? 41. And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

This miracle which Christ wrought for the relief of his disciples, in stilling the storm, we had before, *Matt. viii. 23, &c.* but it is here more fully related. Observe,

1. It was *the same day* that he had preached out of a ship, *when the even was come*, ver. 35. When he had been *labouring in the word and doctrine* all day, instead of *reposing* himself, he *exposeth* himself, to teach us not to think of a constant remaining rest, till we come to heaven. The end of a toil may perhaps be but the beginning of a toils. But observe, the ship that Christ made his pulpit, is taken under his special protection, and though in danger cannot sink. What is used for Christ, he will take particular care of.

2. He himself proposed putting to sea at night, because he would lose no time. *Let us pass over to the other side*, for we shall find in the next chapter, he has work to do there. Christ went about doing good, and no difficulties in his way should hinder him; thus industrious we should be in serving him, and our generation according to his will.

3. They did not put to sea, till *they had sent away the multitude*, i. e. had given to each of them that which they came for, and answered all their requests; for he sent none home complaining, that they had attended him *in vain*. Or, they sent them away *with a solemn blessing*, for Christ came into the world not only to pronounce, but to *command*, and to *give* the blessing.

4. They took him *even as he was*, i. e. in the same dress that he was in when he preached, without any cloke to throw over him, which he ought to have had to keep him *warm*, when he went to sea at night, especially after preaching. We must not from hence infer, that we may be careless of our health, but we may learn hence, not to be over-nice, and solicitous about the body.

5. The storm was so great, that the ship was *full of water*, ver. 37. not by springing a leak, but perhaps partly with the shower, for the word here used signifies a *tempest of wind with rain*; however, the ship being little, the waves beat into it, so that *it was full*. Note, It is no new thing for that ship, to be greatly hurried and endangered, in which Christ and his disciples, Christ and his name, and gospel, are embarked.

6. There were *with him other little ships*, who, no doubt, shared in the distress and danger. Probably those *little ships* carried those who were desirous to go along with Christ, for the benefit of his preaching and miracles on the other side. The *multitude went away*, when he put to sea, but some there were that would venture upon the water with him. Those follow the Lamb aright, that follow him *wherever he goes*. And those that hope for a happiness in Christ, must be willing to take their lot with him, and run the same risks that he runs. One may boldly and cheerfully put to sea in Christ's company, yea, though we foresee a storm.

7. Christ was asleep in this storm, and here we are told, that it was *in the hinder part of the ship*, the pilot's place, he lay at the helm, to intimate that, as Mr. George Herbert expresseth it,

*When winds and waves assault my keel,  
He doth preserve it, he doth steer,  
Even when the boat seems most to reel.  
Storms are the triumph of his art;  
Though he may close his eyes, yet not his heart.*

He had a *pillow* there, such a one as a fisherman's ship would furnish him with. And he *slept*, to try the faith of his disciples and to stir up prayer: and upon the trial their faith appeared *weak*, and their prayers *strong*. Note, Sometimes when the church is in a storm, Christ seems as if he were asleep, unconcerned in the troubles of his people, and regardless of their prayers, and doth not presently appear for their relief. *Verily he is a God that hideth himself*, Isa. xlv. 15. But as when he tarries, he doth not tarry, *Hab. ii. 3*. So when he sleeps, he doth not sleep; the keeper of Israel doth not so much as slumber, *Psal. cxxi. 3, 4*. he slept but his heart was awake, as the spouse, *Cant. v. 2*.

8. His disciples encouraged themselves with their having his presence, and thought it the best way to improve that, and appeal to that, and ply the oar of prayer, rather than their other oars. Their confidence lay in this, that they had their Master with them; and the ship that has Christ in it, though it may be *tossed*, it cannot *sink*; the bush that has God in it, though it may *burn*, shall not *consume*. Cæsar encouraged the master of the ship, that had him on board with this, *Cæsarem vehis & fortunam Cæsaris*. They *awoke* Christ. Had not the necessity of the case called for it, they would not have *stirred up* or *awoke* their Master till he had pleased, *Cant. ii. 7*. But they knew he would *forgive them this wrong*. When Christ seems as if he slept in a storm, he is awaked by the prayers of his people; when we know not what to do, our eye must be to him, *2 Chron. xx. 12*, at our wits end, but not at our faith's end, while we have such a Saviour to go to. Their address to Christ is here expressed very emphatically, *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* I confess this sounds somewhat harsh, rather like chiding him for sleeping, than begging him to awake; I know no excuse for it, but the great familiarity which he was pleased to admit them into, and the freedom he allowed them; and the present distress they were in which put them into such a fright, that they knew not what they said. They do Christ a deal of wrong, who suspect him to be *careless* of his people in distress. The matter is not so! he is not willing that any should perish, much less any of his little ones, *Mat. xviii. 14*.

9. The word of command with which Christ rebuked the storm we have here, and had not in Matthew, ver. 39. He says, *Peace, be still*, *σιῶπα, ὡσιμωσο*, *be silent, be dumb*. Let not the wind any longer roar, nor the sea rage. Thus he *stills the noise of the sea, the noise of her waves*; a particular emphasis is laid upon the noisiness of them, *Psal. lxxv. 7*. and *Psal. xciii. 3, 4*. The noise is threatening and terrifying, let us hear no more of it. This is, (1.) A word of command to us; when our wicked hearts are *like the troubled sea which cannot rest*, Isa. lvii. 20. When our passions are up, and are unruly, think we hear the law of Christ, saying, *be silent, be dumb*. Think not confusedly, speak not unadvisedly; but *be still*. (2.) A word of comfort to us, that be the storm of trouble never so loud, never so strong, Jesus Christ can lay it with a word's speaking. When without are fightings, and within are fears, and the spirits are in a tumult, Christ can *create the fruit of the lips peace*. If he say, *Peace, be still*, there is a *great calm* presently. It is spoken of as God's prerogative to command the seas, *Isa. lvii. 15*. *Jer. xxxi. 35*. By this therefore Christ proves himself to be God. He that made the seas can make them *quiet*.

10. The reproof Christ gave them for their fears, is here carried further than in Matthew; there it is, *Why are ye fearful?* Here, *Why are ye so fearful?* Tho' there may be cause for some fear, yet not for fear to such a degree as this. There it is, *O ye of little faith*, here it is, *How is it that ye have no faith?* Not that the disciples were without faith. No, They believed that *Jesus is the Christ the Son of God*, but at this time their fears prevailed so, that they seemed to *have no faith* at all. It was out of the way, when they had occasion for it, and so it was, as if they had not had it. *How is it, that in this matter you have no faith?* That you think I would not come in with seasonable, and effectual relief? Those may suspect their faith, who can entertain such a thought as that Christ *careth not*, though his *people perish*, and Christ justly takes it ill.

Lastly, The impression this miracle made upon the disciples, is here differently expressed. In Matthew it is said, *the men marvelled*; here it is said, *they feared greatly*. They *feared a great fear*; so the original reads it. Now their fear was rectified by their faith. When they feared the winds and the seas, it was for want of the reverence they ought to have for Christ: But now they saw a demonstration of his power over them, they feared *them* less, and *him* more. They *feared* lest they had offended Christ by their unbelieving fears, and therefore studied now to give him honour. They had *feared* the power and wrath of the Creator in the storm, and that fear had torment and amazement in it; but now they feared the power and grace of the Redeemer in the calm, they *feared the Lord and his goodness*, and it had pleasure and satisfaction in it, and by it they gave glory to Christ, as Jonah's mariners, who when the *sea ceased from her raging*, *feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord*, *Jon. i. 16*. This sacrifice they offered to the honour of Christ, they said, *What manner of man is this?* Surely more than a man, for even the winds and the seas obey him.



## C H A P. V.

In this chapter, we have, (1.) Christ's casting the legion of devils out of the man possessed, and suffering them to enter into the swine, ver. 1—20. (2.) Christ's healing the woman with the bloody issue in the way, as he was going to raise Jairus's daughter to life, ver. 21—43. These three miracles we had the story of before, Matt. viii. 28, &c. and Matt. ix. 18, &c. but more fully related here.

1. **A**ND they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. 2. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit, 3. Who had his dwelling among the tombs, and no man could bind him, no not with chains: 4. Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. 5. And always night and day he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones. 6. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, 7. And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. 8. (For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit) 9. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. 10. And he besought him much, that he would not send them away out of the country. 11. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains, a great herd of swine feeding. 12. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. 13. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine, and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand) and were choked in the sea. 14. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. 15. And they came to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind, and they were afraid. 16. And they that saw it, told them how it befel to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. 17. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. 18. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil, prayed him that he might be with him. 19. Howbeit, Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. 20. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis, how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

We have here an instance of Christ's dispossessing the strong man armed, and disposing of him as he pleased, to make it appear he was stronger than he. This he did when he was come to the other side, whither he went through a storm, and his business there was to rescue this poor creature out of the hands of Satan, and when he had done that he returned. Thus he came from heaven to earth, and returned in a storm to redeem a remnant of mankind out of the hands of the devil, though but a little remnant, and did not think his pains ill bestowed.

In Matthew they were said to be two possessed with devils, here it is said to be a man possessed with an unclean spirit. If there were two there was one, and Mark doth not say there was but one, so that this difference cannot give us any just offence; it is likely, one of them was much more remarkable than the other, and said what was said. Now observe here,

1. The miserable condition that this poor creature was in; he was under the power of an unclean spirit, the devil got possession of him, and the effect of it was not, as in many, a silent melancholy, but a raging frenzy; he was raving mad; his condi-

tion seems to have been worse than any of those that were possessed, that were Christ's patients.

1. He had his dwelling among the tombs, among the graves of dead people. Their tombs were out of the cities, in desolate places, Job iii. 14. which gave the devil great advantage: For wo to him that is alone. Perhaps the devil drove him to the tombs, to make people fancy that the souls of the dead were turned into dæmons, and did what mischief was done, so to excuse themselves from it. The touch of a grave was polluting, Numb. xix. 16. The unclean spirit drives people into that company, that is defiling, and so keeps possession of them. Christ, by rescuing souls out of Satan's power, saves the living from among the dead.

2. He was very strong and ungovernable. No man could bind him, as it is requisite both for their own good, and for the safety of others, that those who are distracted should be. Not only cords would not hold him, but chains and fetters of iron would not, ver. 3, 4. The case of such is very deplorable; that need to be thus bound, and of all miserable people in this world, they are most to be pitied; but his case was worst of all, in whom the devil was so strong that he could not be bound. This sets forth the sad condition of those souls in which the devil has dominion; those children of disobedience, in whom that unclean spirit works; some notoriously wilful sinners are like this mad-man; all are herein like the horse and the mule, that they need to be held in with bit and bridle, but some are like the wild ass, that will not be so held. The commands and curses of the law are as chains and fetters, to restrain sinners from their wicked courses, but they break these bands in sunder; and it is an evidence of the power of the devil in them.

3. He was a terror and torment to himself, and to all about him, ver. 5. The devil is a cruel master to those that are led captive by him, a perfect tyrant; this wretched creature was night and day in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones, either bemoaning his own deplorable case, or in rage and indignation against heaven. Men in frenzies often wound and destroy themselves; what is a man when reason is dethroned, and Satan enthroned? The worshippers of Baal, in their fury, cut themselves, like this mad-man in his. The voice of God is, Do thyself no harm, the voice of Satan is, Do thyself all the harm thou canst; yet God's word is despised, and Satan's regarded. Perhaps his cutting himself with stones, was only cutting his feet with the sharp stones he ran bare-foot upon.

2. His application to Christ, ver. 6. When he saw Jesus afar off coming ashore, he ran and worshipped him. He usually ran upon others with rage, but he ran to Christ with reverence. That was done by an invisible hand of Christ, which could not be done with chains and fetters, his fury was all on a sudden curbed: Even the devil, in this poor creature, was forced to tremble before Christ, and bow to him: Or rather, the poor man came and worshipped Christ, in a sense of the need he had of his help, the power of Satan in and over him being for this instant suspended.

3. The word of command Christ gave to the unclean spirit to quit his possession, ver. 8. Come out of him, thou unclean spirit. He made the man desirous to be relieved, when he enabled him to run and worship him, and then put forth his power for his relief: If Christ work in us heartily to pray for a deliverance from Satan, he will work for us that deliverance. Here is an instance of that power and authority, with which Christ commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed him, chap. i. 27. He said, Come out of the man. The design of Christ's gospel, is to expel unclean spirits out of the souls of people; come out of the man, thou unclean spirit, that the holy Spirit may enter, may take possession of the heart, and have dominion in it.

4. The dread which the devil had of Christ. The man ran and worshipped Christ, but it was the devil in the man that cried with a loud voice, (making use of the poor man's tongue) What have I to do with thee? ver. 7. just as that other unclean spirit, chap. i. 24. (1.) He calls God the most high God, above all other gods. By the name Elion, the most high, God was known among the Phœnicians, and the other nations that bordered upon Israel, and by that name the devil calls him. (2.) He owns Jesus to be the Son of God. Note, It is no strange thing to hear the best words drop from the worst mouths. There is such a way of saying this, as none can attain to, but by the holy Ghost, 1. Cor. xii. 3. yet it may be said, after a sort, by the unclean spirit. There is no judging of men by their loose sayings, but by their fruits ye shall know them. Piety from the teeth outward, is an easy thing. The most fair-spoken hypocrite cannot say better than to call Jesus the Son of God, and yet that the devil did. (3.) He disowns any design against Christ; What have I to do with thee? I have no need of thee, I pretend to none; I desire to have nothing to do with thee; I cannot stand before thee, and would not fall. (4.) He deprecates his wrath. I adjure thee, that is, I earnestly beseech thee, by all that is sacred, I beg of thee for God's sake, by whose permission I have got possession of this man, that though thou drive me out hence, yet that thou torment me not, that thou do not restrain me from doing mischief somewhere else; though I know I am sentenced, yet let me not be sent to the chains of darkness, or hindered from going to and fro to devour.



5. The account Christ took from this unclean spirit of his name. This we had not in Matthew. Christ asked him, *What is thy name?* not but that Christ could call all the fallen stars, as well as the morning stars, by their names; but he demands this, that the standers-by might be affected with the vast numbers and powers of those malignant infernal spirits, as they had reason to be, when the answer was, *My name is Legion, for we are many*; a legion of soldiers among the Romans consisted, some say, of six thousand men, others of twelve thousand and five hundred; but the number of a legion with them, no more than of a regiment with us, was not always the same. Now this intimates, that the devils, the infernal powers, are (1.) *Military powers*; a legion is a number of soldiers in arms. The devils war against God and his glory, Christ and his gospel, men and their holiness and happiness. They are such as we are to *resist*, and *wrestle against*, Eph. vi. 12. (2.) That they are *numerous* he *owns*, or rather he *boasts*, that *we are many*, as if he hoped to be *too many* for Christ himself to deal with. What multitudes of apostate spirits were there, and all enemies to God and man; when here were a legion posted to keep garrison in one poor wretched creature against Christ? Many there be that rise up against us. (3.) That they are *unanimous*; they are *many devils*, and yet but *one legion*, engaged in the same wicked cause; and therefore that cavil of the Pharisees, which supposed Satan to cast out Satan, and to be divided against himself, was altogether groundless. It was not *one* of this legion that betrayed the rest, for they all said as one man, *What have I to do with thee?* (4.) That they are *very powerful*; who can stand before a *legion*? We are not a match for our spiritual enemies in our own strength, but *in the Lord*, and *in the power of his might*, we shall be able to *stand against them*, though there are legions of them. (5.) That there is *order* among them; as there is in a *legion*; there are *principalities and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world*, which supposeth there are those of a lower rank; the devil and his angels; the *dragon* and his. The prince of the devils and his subjects; which makes those enemies the more formidable.

6. The request of this legion, that Christ would suffer them to go into a herd of swine, that was *feeding nigh unto the mountains*, ver. 11. those mountains which the demoniacs haunted, ver. 5. Their request was, (1.) That he *would not send them away out of the country*, ver. 10. Not only that he would not *commit* them, or *confine* them to their infernal prison, and so *torment them before the time*; but that he would not *banish* them *that country*, as justly he might, because in this poor man they had been such a terror to it, and done so much mischief. They seem to have had a particular affection for *that country*; or rather, a particular spite to it; and to have liberty to *walk to and fro through the rest of the earth* will not serve, (Job i. 7.) unless the *range of those mountains* be allowed them for their pasture, (Job xxxix. 8.) but why would they abide in *that country*? Grotius saith, because in *that country* there were many *apostate Jews*, who had thrown themselves out of the covenant of God, and had thereby given Satan power over them. And some suggest, that having by experience got the knowledge of the dispositions and manners of the people of that country, they could the more effectually do them mischief, by their temptations. (2.) That he would suffer them to *enter into the swine*; by destroying which, they hoped to do more mischief to the souls of all the people in the country, than they could by entering into the body of any particular person, which therefore they did not ask leave to do, for they knew Christ would not grant it.

7. The permission Christ gave them to enter into the swine, and their immediate destruction thereby. *He gave them leave*, ver. 13. he did not forbid or restrain them, let them do as they had a mind. Thus he would let the Gadarenes see, what powerful, spiteful enemies devils are, that they might thereby be induced to make him their friend, who alone was able to controul and conquer them, and had made it appear he was so. Immediately the *unclean spirits entered into the swine*, which by the law were unclean creatures, and naturally love to *wallow in the mire*, and therefore the fittest place for them. Those, that, like the swine, delight in the *mire* of sensual lusts, are fit habitations for Satan, and are, like Babylon, the *hold of every foul spirit*, and a *cage of every unclean and hateful bird*, Rev. xviii. 2. as pure souls are habitations of the holy Spirit. The consequent of the devils entering into the swine was, that they all *ran mad* presently, and ran headlong into the adjoining sea, where they were all drowned, to the number of *two thousand*. The man they possessed did only *cut himself*, for God had said, *He is in your hands, only save his life*. But thereby it appeared, that if he had not been so restrained, the poor man would have *drowned himself*. See how much we are indebted to the providence of God, and the ministration of good angels, for our preservation from malignant spirits.

8. The report of all this dispersed through the country immediately. They that *fed the swine*, hastened to the owners to give an account of their charge, ver. 14. This drew the people together, to see what was done: And (1.) When they saw how wonderfully the poor man was cured, they from thence

conceived a *veneration for Christ*, ver. 15. They saw him that was *possessed with the devil*, and knew him well enough, by the same token, that they had many a time been frightened at the sight of him; and were now as much surprized to see him *sitting clothed, and in his right mind*; when Satan was cast out, he came to himself, and was his own man presently. Note, Those who are grave and sober, and live by rule, and with consideration, thereby make it appear, that by the power of Christ, the devil's power is broken in their souls. The sight of this *made them afraid*, i. e. it astonished them, and forced them to own the power of Christ, and that he is *worthy to be feared*. But, (2.) When they found that their swine were lost, they thence conceived a *dislike of Christ*, and wished to have rather his room, than his company; they prayed him to *depart out of their coasts*, for they think not any good he can do them, sufficient to make them amends for the loss of so many swine, fat swine it may be, and ready for the market. Now the devils had what they would have, for by no handle do those evil spirits more effectually manage sinful souls, than by that of the love of the world. They were afraid of some further punishment, if Christ should tarry among them, whereas, if they would but part with their sins, he had life and happiness for them; but being loth to quit either their sins or their swine, they chose rather to abandon their Saviour. Thus they do, who rather than let go a base lust, will throw away their interest in Christ, and their expectations from him. They should rather have argued, if he has such power as this over devils, and all creatures, it is good having him our friend; if the devils have leave to tarry *in our country*, (ver. 10.) let us intreat him to tarry in it too, who alone can controul them. But, instead of this, they wished him further off; such strange misconstructions do carnal hearts make of the just judgments of God; instead of being by them driven to him, as they ought, they set him at so much a greater distance; though he hath said, *Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt*, Jer. xxv. 6.

9. An account of the carriage of the poor man that was delivered, after his deliverance. (1.) He *desired that he might go along with Christ*, ver. 18. perhaps for fear, lest the evil spirit should again seize him, or rather, that he might receive instruction from him, being unwilling to stay among those heathenish people that desired him to depart. Those that are freed from the evil spirit, cannot but covet acquaintance and fellowship with Christ. (2.) Christ *would not suffer him* to go with him, lest it should savour of ostentation, and to let him know, that he could both protect and instruct him at a distance. And besides, he had other work for him to do, he must go home to his friends, and tell them, what *great things the Lord had done for him*, the Lord Jesus had done, that Christ might be honoured, and his neighbours and friends might be edified, and invited to believe in Christ. He must take particular notice, rather of Christ's pity than of his power, for that is it which especially he glories in; he must tell them what *compassion* the Lord had had on him in his misery. (3.) The man in a transport of joy proclaimed it all the country over, what *great things Jesus had done for him*, ver. 20. This is a debt we owe both to Christ and to our brethren, that he may be glorified, and they edified. And see what was the effect of it, *all men did marvel*, but few went any further. Many that cannot chuse but wonder at the works of Christ, yet do not as they ought *wonder after him*.

21. And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him, and he was nigh unto the sea. 22. And behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, 23. And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death, *I pray thee* come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed, and she shall live. 24. And Jesus went with him, and much people followed him, and thronged him. 25. And a certain woman which had an issue of blood twelve years, 26. And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, 27. When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. 28. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. 29. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up: and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. 30. And Jesus immediately knowing in himself, that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? 31. And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 32. And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. 33. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came



came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. 34. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

The Gadarenes having desired Christ to leave their country, he did not stay to trouble them long, but presently went by water, as he came, back to the other side, ver. 21. and there much people gathered to him. Note, If there be some that reject Christ, yet there are others that receive him, and bid him welcome. A despised gospel will cross the water, and go where it will have better entertainment. Now among the many that applied themselves to him,

1. Here is one that comes openly to beg a cure for a sick child; and it is no less a person than one of the rulers of the synagogue, one that presided in the synagogue-worship, or, as some think, one of the judges of the consistory court, which was in every city, consisting of twenty three. He was not named in Matthew, he is here, Jairus, or Jair. (*Judg. x. 3.*) He addressed himself to Christ, though a ruler, with great humility and reverence; when he saw him he fell at his feet, giving honour to him as one really greater than he appeared to be; and with great importunity, he besought him greatly, as one in earnest, as one that not only valued the mercy he came for, but that knew he could obtain it no where else. The case is this, he has a little daughter about twelve years old, the darling of the family, and she lies a dying; but he believes if Christ will but come and lay his hands upon her, she will return even from the gates of the grave. He said at first when he came, she lies a dying, so Mark, but afterwards upon fresh information sent him, he saith, she is even now dead, so Matthew; but still prosecutes his suit; see Luke viii. 42, 49. Christ readily agreed and went with him, ver. 24.

2. Here is another that comes clandestinely to steal a cure (if I may so say) for her self, and she got the relief she came for. This cure was wrought by the way, as he was going to raise the ruler's daughter, and was followed by a crowd. See how Christ improved his time, and lost none of the precious moments of it. Many of his discourses, and some of his miracles are dated by the way side; we should be doing good, not only when we sit in the house, but when we walk by the way, Deut. vi. 7. Now observe,

1. The piteous case of this poor woman. She had a constant issue of blood upon her for twelve years, which had thrown her, no doubt, into great weakness, had embittered the comfort of her life, and threatened to be her death in a little time. She had had the best advice of physicians she could get, and had made use of the many medicines and methods they prescribed; as long as she had any thing to give them, they had kept her in hopes they could cure her, but now she had spent all she had among them, they gave her up as incurable. See here, (1.) That skin for skin, and all that a man has will he give for life and health; she spent all she had upon physicians. (2.) It is ill with those patients, whose physicians are their worst disease; that suffer by their physicians, instead of being relieved by them. (3.) Those that are not bettered by medicines commonly grow worse, and the disease gets the more ground. (4.) It is usual that people do not apply themselves to Christ, till they have tried in vain all other helpers; and find them, as certainly they will, physicians of no value. And he will be found a sure refuge, even to those who make him their last refuge.

2. The strong faith that she had in the power of Christ to heal her; she said within her self, tho' it doth not appear she was encouraged by any preceding instance to say it; *If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole*, ver. 28. She believed he cured not as a prophet by virtue derived from God, but as the Son of God by a virtue inherent in himself. Her case was such, as she could not in modesty tell him publicly, as others did their grievances, and therefore a private cure was what she wished for, and her faith was suited to her case.

3. The wonderful effect produced by it. She came in the crowd behind him, and with much ado got to touch his garment, and immediately she felt the cure wrought, ver. 29. The flux of blood was dried up, and she felt her self perfectly well all over her, as well as ever she was in her life, in an instant; by this it appears, that the cure was altogether miraculous; for those that in such cases are cured by natural means recover their strength slowly, and gradually, and not *per saltum*, but as for God his work is perfect. Note, Those whom Christ heals of the disease of sin, that bloody issue, cannot but experience in themselves an universal change for the better.

4. Christ's enquiry after his concealed patient, and the encouragement he gave her upon the discovery of her. Christ knew in himself that virtue had gone out of him, ver. 30. He knew it not by any deficiency of spirits through the exhausting of this virtue, but rather by an agility of spirits in the exerting of it, and the innate and inseparable pleasure he had in doing good. And being desirous to see his patient, he asked not in displeasure as one affronted, but in tenderness as one concerned, *who touched my clothes?* The disciples, not without a shew of rudeness and indecency, almost ridiculed his question, ver. 31. The multitudes throng

thee, and sayest thou, who touched me? As if it had been an improper question; Christ passed by the affront, and looks round to see her that had done this thing, not that he might blame her for her presumption, but that he might commend and encourage her faith; and by his own act and deed might warrant and confirm the cure; and ratify to her that which she had surreptitiously obtained. He needed not that any should inform him, for he had presently his eye upon her. Note, As secret acts of sin, so secret acts of faith are known to the Lord Jesus, and are under his eye. If believers derive virtue from Christ never so closely; he knows it and is pleased with it. The poor woman hereupon presented her self to the Lord Jesus, ver. 33. *fearing and trembling*, not knowing how he would take it. Note, Christ's patients are often trembling, when they have reason to be triumphing. She might have come boldly, *knowing what was done in her*, yet *knowing that*, she fears and trembles. It was a surprise and was not yet, as it should have been, a pleasing surprise. However she fell down before him. Note, There is nothing better for those that fear and tremble, than to throw themselves at the feet of the Lord Jesus; to humble themselves before him, and refer themselves to him. And she told him all the truth. Note, We must not be ashamed to own the secret transactions between Christ and our souls, but when called to it, mention to his praise, and others encouragement, what he has done for our souls, and the experience we have had of healing virtue derived from him. And the consideration of this, that nothing can be hid from Christ, should engage us to confess all to him. And see what an encouraging word he gave her, ver. 34. *Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole*. Note, Christ puts honour upon faith, because faith gives honour to Christ. But see how, what is done by faith on earth, is ratified in heaven; Christ saith, *be whole of thy disease*. Note, If our faith sets the seal of its amen to the power and promise of God, saying, so it is, and so let it be to me, God's grace will set the seal of its amen to the prayers and hopes of faith, saying, so be it, and so it shall be to thee. And therefore, *go in peace*; be well satisfied, that thy cure is honestly come by, is effectually wrought, and take the comfort of it. Note, They that by faith are healed of their spiritual diseases, have reason to go in peace.

35. While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogues house, certain which said, Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further? 36. As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, be not afraid, only believe. 37. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. 38. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. 39. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. 40. And they laughed him to scorn: but when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entrench in where the damsel was lying. 41. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi, which is being interpreted, Damsel (I say unto thee) arise. 42. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years: and they were astonished with a great astonishment. 43. And he charged them straitly, that no man should know it: and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

Diseases and deaths came into the world by the sin and disobedience of the first Adam; but by the grace of the second Adam both are conquered; Christ having healed an incurable disease, here goes on to triumph over death, as in the beginning of the chapter he had triumphed over an outrageous devil.

1. The melancholy news is brought to Jairus, that his daughter is dead, and therefore if Christ be as other physicians, he comes too late; while there is life there is hope, and room for the use of means, but when life is gone it is past recal, *Why troublest thou the Master any further?* ver. 35. Ordinarily the proper thought in this case is, the matter is determined, the will of God is done, and I submit, I acquiesce, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*. While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, who can tell but God will yet be gracious to me, and the child shall live; but now it is dead, wherefore should I weep? I shall go to it, but it shall not return to me: and with such words we should quiet our selves at such a time, that our souls may be as a child that is weaned from his mother: but here the case was extraordinary; the death of the child, doth not as usually put an end to the narrative.

2. Christ encourageth the afflicted father yet to hope, that his application to Christ on the behalf of his child should not be in vain.



vain. Christ had stayed to work a cure by the way, but he shall be no sufferer by that, nor loser by others gain. *Be not afraid, only believe.* We may suppose Jairus at a pause, whether he should ask Christ to go on or no; but have we not as much occasion for the grace of God, and his consolations, and consequently of the prayers of our ministers and Christian friends, when death is in the house, as when sickness is. Christ therefore soon determines this matter, *be not afraid* that my coming will be to no purpose, only believe that I will make it turn to a good account. Note, (1.) We must not despair concerning our relations that are dead, nor sorrow for them *as those that have no hope.* See what is said to Rachel that *refused to be comforted concerning her children*, upon presumption that they were not; *restrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for there is hope in thine end that thy children shall come again*, Jer. xxxi. 16, 17. Therefore fear not, faint not. (2.) Faith is the only remedy against disquieting grief and fear at such a time: let that silence them, *only believe.* Keep up a confidence in Christ, and a dependence upon him, and he will do what is for the best. Believe the resurrection, and then be not afraid.

3. He went with a select company to the house where the dead child was. He had, by the crowd that attended him, given advantage to the poor woman he last healed, and having done that, now he shook off the crowd; and *suffered no man to follow him, to follow with him*, so the word is, but his three bosom disciples, Peter, and James and John, a competent number to be witnesses of the miracle, but not such a number as that his taking them with him might look like vain glory.

4. He raised the dead child to life; the circumstances of the narrative here, are much the same as we had them in Matthew; only here we may observe,

1. That the child was extremely well beloved, for the relations and neighbours *wept and wailed greatly.* It is very afflictive when that which is come forth like a flower is so soon cut down, and withereth before it is grown up; when that grieves us of which we said, *This same shall comfort us.*

2. That it was evident beyond dispute, that the child was really and truly dead. Their *laughing* Christ to scorn, for saying, *She is not dead but sleepeth*, though an ill thing, serves for the proof of this.

3. That Christ put those out as unworthy to be witnesses of the miracle who were noisy in their sorrow, and were so ignorant in the things of God, as not to understand him when he spoke of death as a *sleep*, or so scornful as to ridicule him for it.

4. That he took the parents of the child to be witnesses of the miracle, because in it he had an eye to *their faith*, and designed it for their comfort who were the *true*, for they were the *silent*, mourners.

5. That Christ raised the child to life by a word of power, which is recorded here, and recorded in Syriac, the language in which Christ spoke, for the greater certainty of the thing, *Talitha cumi, damsel, I say unto thee arise.* Dr. Lightfoot saith, it was customary with the Jews, when they gave physick to one that was sick, they said, *Arise from thy disease*, meaning, *we wish thou mayest arise*; but to one that was dead, Christ said, *Arise from the dead*, meaning, *I command that thou arise*; nay, there is more in it, the dead have not power to arise, therefore power goes along with this word to make it effectual. *Da quod jubes, & jube quod vis.* Christ works while he commands, and works by the command, and therefore may command what he pleaseth, even the dead to arise. Such is the gospel-call to those that are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and can no more rise from that death by their own power, than this child could; and yet that word, *awake and arise from the dead*, is neither vain, nor in vain, when it follows immediately, *Christ shall give thee life*, Ephes. v. 14. It is by the word of Christ that spiritual life is given, *I said unto thee, live*; Ezek. xvi. 6.

6. That the damsel, as soon as life returned, *arose and walked*, ver. 42. Spiritual life will appear by our *rising* from the bed of sloth and carelessness, and our *walking* in a religious conversation; our walking *up and down* in Christ's name and strength; even from those that are *of the age of twelve years*, it may be expected that they should walk as those whom Christ has *raised to life*, otherwise than in the native *vanity of their minds.*

7. That all who saw it, and heard of it, admired the miracle, and him that wrought it, *They were astonished with a great astonishment.* They could not but acknowledge that there was something in it extraordinary and very great, and yet they knew not what to make of it, or to infer from it. Their wonder should have worked forward to a lively faith, but it rested in a *stupor* or *astonishment.*

8. That Christ endeavoured to conceal it. *He charged them straitly that no man should know it*: It was sufficiently known to a competent number, but he would not have it as yet *proclaimed* any further; because his own resurrection was to be the great instance of his power over death, and therefore the divulging of other instances must be reserved till that great proof was given: let one part of the evidence be kept private, till the other part, on which the main stress lies, be made ready.

9. That Christ took care something should be *given her to eat.* By this it appeared that she was raised not only to life, but to a

good state of health, that she had an appetite to her meat; even the new born babes in Christ's house desire the sincere milk, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. And it is observable, that as Christ, when at first he had made man, presently provided food for him, and food out of the earth of which he was made, Gen. i. 29. So now when he had given a new life, he took care that something should be given to eat; for if he have given *life*, he may be trusted to give *livelihood*, because *the life is more than meat*, Mat. vi. 25. Where Christ hath given *spiritual life*, he will provide food for the support and nourishment of it unto life eternal, for he will *never forsake*, or be wanting to the *work of his own hands.*

## C H A P. VI.

*A great variety of observable passages we have in this chapter concerning our Lord Jesus, the substance of all which we had before in Matthew, but divers circumstances we have, which we did not there meet with. Here is, (1.) Christ contemned by his countrymen, because he was one of them, and they knew, or thought they knew, his original, ver. 1—6. (2.) The just power he gave his apostles over unclean spirits, and an account given of their negotiation, ver. 7—13. (3.) A strange notion which Herod and others had of Christ, upon which occasion, we have the story of the martyrdom of John Baptist, ver. 14—29. (4.) Christ's retirement into a desert place with his disciples; the crowds that followed him thither to receive instruction from him, and his feeding five thousand of them with five loaves and two fishes, ver. 30—44. (5.) Christ's walking upon the sea to his disciples, and the abundance of cures he wrought on the other side the water, ver. 45—56.*

1. **A**ND he went out from thence, and came into his own country, and his disciples follow him. 2. And when the sabbath-day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him, were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? 3. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? and they were offended at him. 4. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. 5. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. 6. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

Here, 1. Christ makes a visit to *his own country*, the place not of his birth, but of his education; that was Nazareth, where his relations were. He had been in danger of his life among them, Luke iv. 29. and yet he came among them again; so strangely doth he wait to be gracious, and seek the salvation of his enemies; whither he went, though it was into danger, *his disciples followed him*, ver. 1. for they had left all to follow him, whithersoever he went.

2. There he *preached* in their *synagogue* on the *sabbath-day*, ver. 2. It seems, there was not such flocking to him there as in other places, so that he had no opportunity of preaching till they came together on the sabbath-day; and then he expounded a portion of scripture with great clearness. In religious assemblies on sabbath-days, the word of God is to be preached, according to Christ's example. We give glory to God by receiving instruction from him.

3. They could not but own that which was very honourable concerning him. (1.) That he spoke with great *wisdom*, and that wisdom was *given to him*, for they knew he had no learned education. (2.) That he did *mighty works*, did them with his own hands for the confirming of the doctrine he taught; they acknowledged the two great proofs of the divine original of his gospel, the *divine wisdom* that appears in the contrivance of it, and the *divine power* that was exerted for the ratifying and recommending of it; and yet, though they could not deny the premisses, they would not admit the conclusion.

4. They studied to disparage him, and to raise prejudices in the minds of people against him notwithstanding: All this *wisdom*, and all these *mighty works*, shall be of no account, because he had had a home education, had never travelled, nor been at any university, or bred up at the feet of any of their doctors, ver. 3. *Is not this the carpenter?* In Matthew they upbraid him with being the carpenter's son, his supposed father Joseph being of that trade:



trade: But, it seems, they could say further, *Is not this the carpenter?* our Lord Jesus, it is probable, employing himself in that business with his father, before he entered upon his publick ministry, at least sometimes in journey-work. (1.) He would thus *humble himself*, and make himself of no reputation, as one that had taken upon him the form of a servant, and came to minister. Thus low did our Redeemer stoop, when he came to redeem us out of our low estate. (2.) He would thus teach us to *abhor idleness*, and to find *ourselves something to do* in this world; and rather to take up with mean and laborious employments, and such as no more is to be got by but a bare livelihood, than indulge ourselves in sloth. Nothing is more pernicious for young people, than to get a *habit of sauntering*. The Jews had a good rule for this, that their young men who were designed for scholars, yet were bred up to some trade, as Paul was a tent-maker, that they might have some business to fill up their time with; and, if need were, to get their bread with. (3.) He would thus put an honour upon despised mechanicks, and encourage those who eat the labour of their hands, tho' great men look upon them with contempt.

Another thing they upbraided him with, was the meanness of his relations, he is *the son of Mary*; his *brethren* and *sisters* are here *with us*; we know his family and kindred; and therefore, tho' they were *astonished* at his doctrine, *ver. 2.* yet they were *offended* at his person, *ver. 2.* were prejudiced against him, and looked upon him with contempt, and for that reason would not receive his doctrine, tho' never so well recommended. May we think that if they had not known his pedigree, but he had dropped among them from the clouds, without father, without mother, and without descent, they would have entertained him with any more respect? Truly, no; for in Judea, where this was not known, that was made an objection against him, *John ix. 29.* *As for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.* Obstinate unbelief will never want excuses.

5. Let us see how Christ bore this contempt.

1. He partly *excused it*, as a common thing, and what might be expected, tho' not reasonably or justly, *ver. 4.* *A prophet is not despised any where but in his own country.* Some exceptions there may be to this rule; doubtless many have got over this prejudice, but ordinarily it holds good, that ministers are seldom so acceptable and successful in their own country, as among strangers; *familiarity* in the younger years breeds a contempt, and the advancement of one that was an inferior, begets *envy*, and men will hardly set those among the guides of their souls, whose fathers they were ready to set with the dogs of their flock; in such a case therefore it must not be thought hard; it is common treatment, it was Christ's, and *wisdom is profitable to direct* to other soil.

2. He did *some good* among them, notwithstanding the slights they put upon him, for he is kind even to the evil and unthankful; he *laid his hands upon a few sick folks and healed them.* Note, It is generous, and becoming the followers of Christ, to content themselves with the pleasure and satisfaction of doing good, tho' they be unjustly denied the praise of it.

3. Yet he *could there do* no such mighty works, at least not so many as in other places, because of the unbelief that prevailed among the people, by reason of the prejudices which their leaders instilled into them against Christ, *ver. 5.* It is a strange expression, as if unbelief tied the hands of omnipotence itself; he *would have done* as many miracles there as he had done elsewhere, but he could not, because people would not make application to him, nor sue for his favours; he could have wrought them, but they forfeited the honour of having them wrought for them. Note, By unbelief and contempt of Christ, men stop the current of his favours to them, and put a bar in their own door.

4. He *marvelled because of their unbelief*, *ver. 6.* We never find Christ wondering but at the *faith* of the Gentiles that were strangers, as the *centurion*, *Matt. viii. 10.* and the woman of Samaria, and at the unbelief of Jews that were his own countrymen. Note, The unbelief of those that enjoy the means of grace, is a most amazing thing.

5. He *went round about the villages, teaching.* If we cannot do good where we would, we must do it where we can, and be glad if we may have any opportunity, tho' but in the villages, of serving Christ and souls. Sometimes the gospel of Christ finds better entertainment in the country *villages*, where there is less wealth, and pomp, and mirth, and subtilty, than in the populous cities.

7. ¶ And he calleth unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two, and gave them power *over unclean spirits*, 8. And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their journey*, save a staff only: no scrip, no bread, no money in *their purse*: 9. But *be shod with sandals*: and not put on two coats. 10. And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. 11. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor

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hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet, for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city. 12. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. 13. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed *them*.

Here is, 1. The commission given to the twelve apostles, to go preach and work miracles; it is the same which we had more largely, *Matt. x.* Mark doth not name them here, as Matthew doth, because he had named them before, when they were first called into fellowship with him, *chap. iii. 16.* Hitherto they had been conversant with Christ, and had sitten at his feet, had heard his doctrine, and seen his miracles; and now he determines to make some use of them; they *received* that they might *give*, had *learned* that they might *teach*; and therefore now he *began to send them forth*. They must not always be studying in the academy to get knowledge, but they must go preach in the country, to do good with the knowledge they have got. Tho' they were not as yet so well accomplished as they will be hereafter, yet according to their present ability and capacity, they must be set to work, and make further improvements afterwards. Now observe here,

1. That Christ sent them forth *by two and two*; this Mark takes notice of: They went two and two to a place, that out of the mouth of two witnesses every word might be established; and that they might be company for one another when they were among strangers, and might strengthen the hands and encourage the hearts one of another; might help one another if any thing should be amiss, and keep one another in countenance: Every common soldier has his comrade; and it is an approved maxim, *Two are better than one.* Christ would thus teach his ministers to associate, and both lend and borrow help.

2. That he *gave them power over unclean spirits*: He commissioned them to attack the devil's kingdom, and empowered them as a specimen of their breaking his interest in the souls of men by their doctrine, to cast him out of the bodies of those that were possessed. Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that they cured diseases and cast out devils by the Spirit, but preached that only which they had learned from the mouth of Christ.

3. That he *commanded them* not to take provisions along with them, neither *viaticals* nor *money*, that they might appear wherever they came, to be poor men, men not of this world, and therefore might with the better grace call people off from it to another world: When afterwards he bid them *take purse and scrip*, *Luke xxii. 36.* that did not intimate (as Dr. Lightfoot observes) that his care of them was abated to what it had been; but that they should meet with worse times and worse entertainment than they met with at their first mission. In Matthew and Luke they are forbidden to *take staves* with them, *i. e.* fighting staves; but here in Mark they are bid to take nothing save a *staff only*, *i. e.* a walking-staff, such as pilgrims carried. They must not put on *shoes*, but *sandals only*, which were only the soles of shoes tied under their feet, or like pumps or slippers; they must go in the readiest plainest dress they could, and must not so much as have *two coats*; for their stay abroad would be short, they must return before winter, and what they wanted, those they preached to would cheerfully accommodate them with.

4. He directed them whatever city they came to, to make that house their head-quarters, which happened to be their first quarters, *ver. 10.* *there abide, till ye depart from that place.* And since you know you come on an errand sufficient to make you welcome, have that charity for your friends that first invited you, as to believe they do not think you burthensome.

5. He pronounceth a very heavy doom upon those that rejected the gospel they preached, *ver. 11.* *Whoever shall not receive you, or will not so much as hear you, depart thence, if one will not, another will, and shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them.* Let them know that they have had a fair offer of life and happiness made them, witness that dust; but that since they have refused it, they cannot expect ever to have another; let them take up with their own dust, for so shall their doom be. That dust, like the dust of Egypt, (*Exod. ix. 9.*) shall turn into a plague to them; and their condemnation in the great day will be more intolerable than *that of Sodom*; for the angels were sent to Sodom, and were abused there, yet that would not bring on so great a guilt and so great a ruin as the contempt and abuse of the apostles of Christ, that bring with them the offers of gospel grace.

2. The apostles actings in pursuance of their commission: Tho' they were conscious to themselves of great weakness, and expected no secular advantage by it, yet in obedience to their Master's order, and in dependence upon his strength, they *went out*, as Abraham, not knowing whither they went. Observe here,

1. The doctrine they preached; they preached *that men should repent*, *ver. 12.* That they should change their minds and reform their lives, in consideration of the near approach of the kingdom of the Messiah. Note, The great design of gospel-preachers, and



the great tendency of gospel-preaching, should be to bring people to repentance, to a *new heart*, and a *new way*. They did not amuse people with curious speculations, but told them they must repent of their sins, and turn to God.

2. The miracles they wrought. The power Christ gave them *over unclean spirits*, was not ineffectual, nor did they receive it in vain, but used it, for they *cast out many devils*, ver. 13. And they *anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them*: Some think this oil was used *medicinally*, according to the custom of the Jews; but I rather think it was used as a *sign* of *miraculous* healing, by the appointment of Christ, though not mentioned; and it was afterwards used by those *elders of the church*, to whom *by the Spirit* was given the *gift of healing*, James v. 14. It is certain here, and therefore probable there, that *anointing the sick with oil*, is appropriated to that extraordinary power which is long ceased, and therefore that sign must cease with it.

14. And king Herod heard of him, (for his name was spread abroad) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. 15. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. 16. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John whom I beheaded, he is risen from the dead. 17. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias sake, his brother Philips wife; for he had married her. 18. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. 19. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him, but she could not. 20. For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy, and observed him, and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. 21. And when a convenient day was come that Herod on his birth-day made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee: 22. And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod, and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. 23. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. 24. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. 25. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger, the head of John the Baptist. 26. And the king was exceeding sorry, yet for his oaths sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. 27. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, 28. And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. 29. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corps, and laid it in a tomb.

Here is, 1. The wild notions that the people had concerning our Lord Jesus, ver. 15. His own countrymen could believe nothing great concerning him, because they knew his poor kindred; but others, that were not under the power of that prejudice against him, yet were willing to believe any thing rather than the truth, that he was the Son of God, and the true Messiah: They said, he is Elias, whom they expected, or, *he is a prophet*, one of the Old Testament prophets raised to life, and returned to this world: Or, *as one of the prophets*, a prophet now newly raised up equal to those under the Old Testament.

2. The opinion of Herod concerning him. He heard of his *name* and fame, of what he said and what he did; and he said, It is certainly John Baptist, ver. 14. As sure as we are here, *It is John whom I beheaded*, ver. 16. He is *risen from the dead*; and though while he was with us *he did no miracle*, yet having removed for a while to another world, he is come again with greater power, and *now mighty works do shew forth themselves in him*.

Note, (1.) Where there is an *idle faith*, there is commonly a *working fancy*. The people said, it is a prophet risen from the dead; Herod said, it is *John Baptist risen from the dead*. It seems by this, that the *rising of a prophet from the dead*, to do *mighty works*, was a thing expected, and was thought neither impossible nor improbable, and it was now readily suspected when it was *not true*; but afterwards when *it was true* concerning Christ, and a truth undeniably evidenced, yet then it was obstinately gain-said and denied. Those who most wilfully dis-

believe the truth, are commonly most credulous of errors and fancies.

(2.) They who fight against the cause of God, will find themselves baffled, even when they think themselves conquerors; they cannot gain their point, for the word of the Lord endures for ever. They who rejoiced when the witnesses were slain, fretted as much, when in three or four days they *rose again* in their successors, Rev. xi. 10, 11. The impenitent, unreformed sinner, that escapeth the sword of Jehu, shall Elisha slay.

(3.) A guilty conscience needs no accuser or tormenter but it self. Herod charges himself with the murder of John, which perhaps no one else dare charge him with, *I beheaded him*; and the terror of it made him imagine that Christ was John risen: He feared John while he lived, and now when he thought he had got clear of him, fears him ten times worse when he is dead: One had as good be haunted with ghosts and furies, as with the horrors of an accusing conscience; those therefore who would keep an undisturbed peace, must keep an undefiled conscience, Acts xxiv. 16.

(4.) There may be the terrors of strong conviction, where there is not the truth of a saving conversion. This Herod that had this notion concerning Christ, afterwards sought to kill him, Luke xiii. 31. and did set him at nought, Luke xxiii. 11. So that he will not be persuaded, tho' it be *by one risen from the dead*; no, not by a John the Baptist risen from the dead.

3. A narrative of Herod's putting John Baptist to death, which is brought in upon this occasion, as it was in Matthew: And here we may observe,

1. The great value and veneration which Herod had sometimes had for John Baptist, which is related only by this evangelist, ver. 20. Where we see what a great way a man may go towards grace and glory, and yet come short of both, and perish eternally.

(1.) He *feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and a holy*. It is possible that a man may have a great reverence for good men, and especially for good ministers; yea, and for that in them that is good, and yet himself be an ill man. Observe, (1.) John was a *just man and a holy*; to make a complete good man, there is necessary both justice and holiness; holiness towards God, and justice towards men. John was mortified to this world, and that is a good friend both to justice and holiness. (2.) Herod knew this, not only by common fame, but by personal acquaintance with him. Those that have but little justice and holiness themselves, may yet discern it with respect in others. And (3.) He therefore *feared* him, he honoured him. Holiness and justice command veneration, and many that are not good themselves, yet have respect for those that are.

(2.) He *observed* him; he sheltered him from the malice of his enemies; so some understand it: Or, rather he had a regard to his exemplary conversation, and took notice of that in him that was praise-worthy, and commended it in the hearing of those about him; he made it appear that he observed what John said and did.

(3.) He *heard him* preach; which was great condescension, considering how mean John's appearance was. To hear Christ himself preach in our streets, will be but a poor plea in the great day, Luke xiii. 26.

(4.) He *did many of those things* which John in his preaching taught him. He was not only a *hearer of the word*, but in part a *doer of the work*. Some sins which John in his preaching re-proved, he forsook, and some duties he bound himself to; but it will not suffice to do *many things*, unless we have *respect to all the commandments*.

(5.) He *heard him gladly*. He did not hear him with terror, as Felix heard Paul, but heard him with pleasure. There is a flashy joy, which an hypocrite may have in hearing the word; Ezekiel was to his hearers a *lovely song*, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. and the *stony ground received the word with joy*, Luke viii. 13.

2. John's faithfulness to Herod, in telling him of his faults. Herod had married his brother Philip's wife, ver. 17. All the country, no doubt, cried shame on him for it, and reproached him for it; but John *reproved* him, told him plainly, *It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife*. This was Herod's own iniquity which he could not leave, when he did many things that John taught him; and therefore John tells him of this particularly. Tho' he were a king, he would not spare him, no more than Elijah did Ahab when he said, *Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?* Though John had an interest in him, and he might fear this plain-dealing would lose him his interest, yet he re-proved him; for *faithful are the wounds of a friend*, Prov. xxvii. 6. and though there are some swine that will *turn again and rend* those that *cast pearls* before them, yet ordinarily, *he that rebuketh a man (if the person reprov'd has any thing of the understanding of a man) afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue*, Prov. xxviii. 23. Though it was dangerous to offend Herod, and much more to offend Herodias, yet John would run the hazard, rather than be wanting in his duty. Note, Those ministers that would be found faithful in the work of God, must not be afraid of the face of man. If we seek to please men, further than is for their spiritual good, we are not the servants of Christ.



3. The malice which Herodias bore to John for this, *ver. 19.* She had a quarrel with him, and would have killed him; but when she could not obtain that, she got him committed to prison, *ver. 17.* Herod respected him, till he touched him in his Herodias. Many that pretend to honour prophesying are for smooth things only, and love good preaching, if it keeps far enough from their beloved sin; but if that be touched, they cannot bear it. No marvel if the world hate those who testify of it, that its works are evil. But ministers had better, that sinners should persecute them now for their faithfulness, than curse them eternally for their unfaithfulness.

4. The plot laid to take off John's head; and I am apt to think Herod was himself in the plot, notwithstanding his pretences to be *displeased* and *surprized*, and that the thing was concerted between him and Herodias, for it is said to be, *when a convenient day was come*, *ver. 21.* fit for such a purpose. (1.) There must be a ball at court upon the king's birth-day, and a supper prepared, for his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee. (2.) To grace the solemnity, the daughter of Herodias must dance publicly, and Herod must take on him to be wonderfully charmed with her dancing: and if he be, they that sit with him cannot but in compliment to him be so too. (3.) The king hereupon must make her an extravagant promise, to give her *whatever she would ask*, even to the *half of the kingdom*; and yet that, if rightly understood, would not have reached the end designed, for John Baptist's head was worth more than his whole kingdom. This promise is bound with an oath, that no room might be left to fly off from it; *He sware to her, whatsoever thou shalt ask, I will give.* I can scarce think, he would have made such an unlimited promise, but that he knew what she would ask. (4.) She being instructed by Herodias her mother, asked the head of John Baptist; and she must have it brought her in a charger, as a pretty thing for her to play with, *ver. 24, 25.* And there must be no delay, no time lost, she must have it *by and by.* (5.) Herod granted it, and the execution was done immediately, while the company were together; which we can scarce think the king would have done, if he had not determined the matter before. But he takes on him, (1.) To be very backward to it, and that he would not for all the world have done it, if he had not been surprized into such a promise. The king was exceeding sorry, that is, he seemed to be so, he said he was so, he looked as if he had been so: but it was all sham and grimace, he was really pleased, that he had found a pretence to get John out of the way. *Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare.* And yet he was not without sorrow for it; he could not do it but with great regret, and reluctance; natural conscience will not suffer men to sin easily; the very commission of it is vexatious, what then will the reflexion upon it be? (2.) He takes on him to be very sensible of the obligation of his oath; whereas if the damsel had asked but a fourth part of his kingdom, I doubt not but he would have found out a way to evade his oath. The promise was rashly made, and could not bind him to do an unrighteous thing. Sinful oaths must be repented of, and therefore not performed, for repentance is the undoing of what we have done amiss, as far as is in our power. When Theodosius the emperor was urged by a suitor with a promise; he answered, *I said it*, but did not promise it, if it be unjust. If we may suppose, that Herod knew nothing of the design when he made that rash promise, it is likely he was hurried into the doing of it by those about him, only to carry on the humour; for he did it for their sakes who sat with him, whose company he was proud of, and therefore would do any thing to gratify them. Thus do princes make themselves slaves to those whose respects they covet, and both value and secure themselves by. None of Herod's subjects stood in more awe of him, than he did of his lords, high captains, and chief estates. The king sent an executioner, a soldier of his guard. Bloody tyrants have executioners ready to obey their most cruel and unrighteous decrees. Thus Saul has a Doeg at hand, to fall upon the priests of the Lord, when his own footmen declined it.

5. The effect of this is, (1.) That Herod's wicked court is all in triumphs, because this prophet tormented them; the head is made a present of to the damsel, and by her to her mother, *ver. 28.* (2.) That John Baptist's sacred college is all in tears; the disciples of John little thought of this, but when they heard of it, they came and took up the neglected corps, and laid it in a tomb; where Herod, if he had pleased, might have found it, when he frightened himself with the fancy, that John Baptist was risen from the dead.

30. And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. 31. And he said unto them, Come ye your selves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. 32. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. 33. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran a foot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.

34. And Jesus when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things. 35. And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: 36. Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. 37. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred penny-worth of bread, and give them to eat? 38. He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. 39. And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. 40. And they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties. 41. And when he had taken the five loaves, and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. 42. And they did all eat, and were filled. 43. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. 44. And they that did eat of the loaves, were about five thousand men.

In these verses we have,

First, The return of the apostles to Christ whom he had sent forth, *ver. 7.* to preach and work miracles. They had dispersed themselves into several quarters of the country for some time, but when they had made good their several appointments, by consent they gathered themselves together to compare notes, and came to Jesus, the centre of their unity, to give him an account of what they had done pursuant to their commission, as the servant that was sent to invite to the feast, and had received answers from the guests, came and shewed his lord all these things; so did the apostles here, they told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. Ministers are accountable both for what they do, and for what they teach; and must both watch over their own souls, and watch for the souls of others, as those that must give account; Heb. xiii. 17. Let them not either do any thing, or teach any thing, but what they are willing should be related and repeated to the Lord Jesus. It is a comfort to faithful ministers, when they can appeal to Christ concerning their doctrine and manner of life, both which perhaps have been misrepresented by men; and he gives them leave to be free with him, and to lay open their case before him, to tell him all things, what treatment they have met with, what success and what disappointment.

Secondly, The tender care Christ took for their repose, after the fatigue they had had, *ver. 31.* He said unto them, perceiving them to be almost spent, and out of breath, Come ye your selves apart, into a desert place, and rest a while. It should seem that John's disciples came to Christ with the mournful tidings of their master's death, much about the same time that his own disciples came to him with the report of their negotiation. Note, Christ takes cognizance of the frights of some, and the toils of others of his disciples, and provides suitable relief for both, rest for those that are tired, and refuge for those that are terrified. With what kindness and compassion doth Christ say to them, come and rest! Note, The most active servants of Christ cannot be always upon the stretch of business, but have bodies that require some relaxation, some breathing-time; we shall not be able to serve God without ceasing, day and night, till we come to heaven, where they never rest from praising him, Rev. iv. 8. And the Lord is for the body, considers its frame, and not only allows it time for rest, but puts it in mind of resting. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers. Return to thy rest. And those that work diligently, and faithfully, may cheerfully retire to rest. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet. But observe, (1.) Christ calls them to come themselves apart, for if they had any body with them, they would have something to say, or something to do for their good; if they must rest, they must be alone. (2.) He invites them not to some pleasant country-seat, where there were fine buildings, and fine gardens, but into a desert place, where the accommodations were very poor, and which was fitted by nature only, not by art; for quietness and rest. But it was of a piece with all the other circumstances he was in; no wonder that he who had but a ship for his preaching place, had but a desert for his resting place. (3.) He calls them only to rest a while, they must not expect to rest long, only to get breath, and then go to work again. There is no remaining rest for the people of God, till they come to heaven. (4.) The reason given for this, is not so much, because they had been in constant work, but because they now were in a constant hurry; so that they had not their work in any order, for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure



leisure so much as to eat. Let but proper time be set and kept for every thing, and a great deal of work may be done with a great deal of ease; but if people are continually coming and going, and no rule or method be observed, a little work will not be done without a deal of trouble. (5.) They withdrew accordingly by ship, not crossing the water, but making a coasting voyage to the desert of Bethsaida, ver. 32. Going by water was much less toilsome, than going by land would have been. They went away privately, that they might be by themselves. The most publick persons, cannot but wish to be private sometimes.

Thirdly, The diligence of the people to follow him. It was rude to do so, when he and his disciples were desirous for such good reason to retire, and yet they are not blamed for it, nor bid to go back, but bid welcome; Note, A failure in good manners, will easily be excused in those who follow Christ, if it be but made up in a fulness of good affections. They followed him of their own accord, without being called upon. Here is no time set, no meeting appointed, no bell tolled, yet they thus fly like a cloud, and as the doves to their windows. They followed him out of the cities, quitted their houses and shops, their callings and affairs to hear him preach. They followed him afoot, tho' he was gone by sea; and so to try them, seemed to put a slight upon them, and to endeavour to shake them off, yet they stuck to him. They ran afoot, and made such haste, as that they out-went the disciples, and came together to him, with an appetite to the word of God. Nay, they followed him, tho' it were into a desert place, despicable, and inconvenient. The presence of Christ will turn a wilderness into a paradise.

Fourthly, The entertainment Christ gave them, ver. 34. When he saw much people, instead of being moved with displeasure, because they disturbed him when he desired to be private, as many a man, many a good man, would have been, he was moved with compassion towards them, and looked upon them with concern, because they were, as sheep having no shepherd, they seemed to be well inclined, and manageable as sheep, and willing to be taught, but they had no shepherd; none to lead and guide them in the right way, none to feed them with good doctrine: and therefore, in compassion to them, he not only healed their sick, as it is in Matthew, but he taught them many things, and we may be sure they were all true and good, and fit for them to learn.

Fifthly, The provision he made for them all; all his hearers he generously made his guests, and treated them at a splendid entertainment: so it might truly be called, because a miraculous one.

1. The disciples moved, that they should be sent home. When the day was now far spent, and night drew on, they said, this is a desert place, and much time is now passed: send them away to buy bread, ver. 35, 36. This the disciples suggested to Christ, but we do not find that the multitude themselves did. They did not say, send us away, no not tho' they could not but be hungry; for they esteemed the words of Christ's mouth, more than their necessary food, and forgot themselves when they were hearing him; but the disciples thought it would be a kindness to them, to dismiss them. Note, Willing minds will do more, and hold out longer in that which is good, than one would expect from them.

2. Christ ordered that they should all be fed, ver. 37. Give ye them to eat. Though their crowding after him, and his disciples hindered them from eating, ver. 38. yet he would not therefore, to be even with them, send them away fasting, but to teach us to be kind to those, who are rude to us, he ordered provision to be made for them; that bread which Christ and his disciples took with them into the desert, that they might make a quiet meal of it for themselves, he will have them to partake of. Thus was he given to hospitality. They attended on the spiritual food of his word, and then he took care they should not want corporal food. The way of duty as it is the way of safety, so it is the way to supply. Let God alone to fill the pools with rain from heaven, and so to make a well even in the valley of Baca, for those that are going Sion-wards, from strength to strength, Psal. lxxxiv. 6, 7. Providence not tempted, but duly trusted, never yet failed any of God's faithful servants, but has refreshed many with seasonable and surprizing relief. It has often been seen in the mount of the Lord, Jehovah Fireh, that the Lord will provide, for those that wait on him.

3. The disciples objected against it as impracticable; shall we go and buy two hundred penny-worth of bread, and give to eat? Thus through the weakness of their faith, instead of waiting for directions from Christ, they perplex the cause with projects of their own. It was a question, whether they had 200 pence with them, and whether the country would of a sudden afford so much bread if they had, and whether that would suffice so great a company; but thus Moses objected, Numb. xi. 22. Shall the flocks or herds be slain for them? Christ would let them see their folly in forecasting for themselves, that they might put the greater value upon his provision for them.

4. Christ effected it to universal satisfaction. They had brought with them five loaves, for the victualling of their ship, and two fishes, perhaps they had caught as they came along, and that is the bill of fare. This was but a little for Christ and his disciples, and yet this they must give away, as the widow her two mites, and the churches of Macedonia's deep poverty abounded to the riches

of their liberality. We often find Christ entertained at other peoples tables, dining with one friend, and supping with another, but here we have him supping a great many at his own charge, which shews, that when others ministered to him of their substance, it was not, because he could not supply himself otherwise: if he were hungry he needed not tell them, but it was a piece of humiliation he was pleased to submit to, nor was it agreeable to the intention of miracles, that he should work them for himself. Observe,

1. The provision was ordinary. Here were no rarities, no varieties, tho' Christ if he had pleased could have furnished his table with them: but thus he would teach us to be content with food convenient for us, and not to be desirous of dainties. If we have for necessity, it is no matter tho' we have not for delicacy and curiosity. God in love gives meat for our hunger, but in wrath gives meat for our lusts, Psal. lxxxviii. 18. The promise to them that fear the Lord is, that verily they shall be fed; he doth not say they shall be feasted. If Christ and his disciples took up with mean things, sure we may.

2. The guests were orderly; for they sat down by companies upon the green grass, ver. 39. they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties, ver. 40. that the provision might the more easily, and regularly be distributed among them; for God is the God of order, and not of confusion. Thus care was taken that every one should have enough, and none be over-looked, nor any have more than was fitting.

3. A blessing was craved upon the meat. He looked up to heaven, and blessed. Christ did not call one of his disciples to crave a blessing, but did it himself, ver. 41. And by virtue of this blessing, the bread strangely multiplied, and so did the fishes, for they did all eat and were filled, tho' they were to the number of five thousand, ver. 42, 44. This miracle was significant, and shews that Christ came into the world to be the great feeder, as well as the great healer; not only to restore, but to preserve and nourish spiritual life; and in him there is enough for all that come to him, enough to fill the soul, to fill the treasures; none are sent empty away from Christ, but those that come to him full of themselves.

4. Care was taken of the fragments that remained, with which they filled twelve baskets. Tho' Christ had bread enough at command, he would hereby teach us, not to make waste of any of God's good creatures; remembering how many there are that do want, and that we know not, but we may some time or other want such fragments as we throw away.

45. And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. 46. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. 47. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. 48. And he saw them toiling in rowing: (for the wind was contrary unto them) and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. 49. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out. 50. (For they all saw him, and were troubled) And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid. 51. And he went up unto them into the ship, and the wind ceased: and they were fore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondred. 52. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened. 53. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. 54. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, 55. And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. 56. And whithersoever he entred, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch, if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him, were made whole.

This passage of story we had Mat. xiv. 22, &c. only what was there related concerning Peter is omitted here. Here we have,

First, The dispersing of the assembly. Christ constrained his disciples to go before by ship to Bethsaida, intending to follow them, as they supposed by land. The people were loth to scatter, so that it cost him some time and pains to send them away. For now they had got a good supper, they were in no haste to leave him. But as long as we are here in this world, we have no continuing city.



city, no not in communion with Christ. The everlasting feast is reserved for the future state.

Secondly, Christ departed *into a mountain to pray*. Observe, (1.) He *prayed*; though he had so much preaching work upon his hands, yet he was much in prayer; he prayed often, and prayed long, which is an encouragement to us to depend upon that intercession he is making for us at the right hand of the Father, that *continual* intercession. (2.) He went *alone* to pray; though he needed not to retire for the avoiding either of distraction or of ostentation, yet to set us an example, and to encourage us in our *secret* addresses to God he prayed *alone*; and for want of a closet went up into a mountain to pray. A good man is never less alone, than when alone with God.

Thirdly, The disciples were in distress at sea; *the wind was contrary*, ver. 48. so that they *toiled in rowing*, and could not get forward. This was a specimen of the hardships they were to expect, when hereafter he should send them abroad to preach the gospel; it would be like sending them to sea at this time with the *wind in their teeth*, they must expect to *toil in rowing*, they must work hard to strive against so strong a stream; they must likewise expect to be *tossed with waves*, to be persecuted by their enemies, and by exposing them now he intended to train them up for such difficulties; that they might learn to *endure hardness*. The church is often like a ship at sea, *tossed with tempests, and not comforted*, we may have Christ for us, and yet wind and tide against us; but it is a comfort to Christ's disciples in a storm, that their Master is in the heavenly mount *interceding* for them.

Fourthly, Christ made them a kind visit upon the water. He could have checked the winds where he was, or have sent an angel to their relief, but he chose to help them in the most endearing manner possible, and therefore came to them himself.

1. He did not come till the *fourth watch of the night*, not till after *three a-clock* in the morning; but then he came. Note, If Christ's visits of his people be deferred long, yet at length he will come; and their extremity is his opportunity to appear for them so much the more seasonably. Though the salvation tarry, yet we must wait for it, *at the end it shall speak*, in the fourth watch of the night, and not lye.

2. He came walking upon the waters. The sea was now tossed with waves, and yet Christ came walking upon it; for though the *floods lift up their voice, the Lord on high is mightier*; Psa. xciii. 3, 4. No difficulties can obstruct Christ's gracious appearances for his people, when the set time is come. He will either *find* or force a way through the most tempestuous sea for their deliverance, Psa. xlii. 7, 8.

3. He would have *passed by them*; i. e. He set his face, and steered his course, as if he would have gone further, and took no notice of them; this he did to awaken them to call to him. Note, Providence when it is acting designedly and directly for the succour of God's people, yet sometimes seems as if it were *giving them the go-by*, and regarded not their case. They thought *he would*, but we may be sure he would not, have *passed by them*.

4. They were frightened at the sight of him, supposing him to have been an apparition; *they all saw him and were troubled*, ver. 50. thinking it had been some daemon, or evil genius, that haunted them, and raised this storm. We often perplex and frighten our selves with phantasms, the creatures of our own fancy and imagination.

5. He encouraged them, and silenced their fears by making himself known to them, *he talked familiarly with them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid*. Note, 1. We know not Christ, till he is pleased to reveal himself to us. *It is I*, I your master, I your friend, I your redeemer and saviour. *It is I* that came to a troublesome earth, and now to a tempestuous sea, to look after you. 2. The knowledge of Christ, as he is in himself, and near to us, is enough to make the disciples of Christ cheerful even in a storm, and no longer fearful. *If it be so, why am I thus?* If it is Christ that is with thee, *be of good cheer, be not afraid*. Our fears are soon satisfied, if our mistakes be but rectified, especially our mistakes concerning Christ. See Gen. xxi. 19. 2 Kings vi. 15, 16, 17. Christ's presence with us in a stormy day is enough to make us of good cheer, though clouds and darkness be round about us. He said; *It is I*. He doth not tell them who he was, that needed not, they knew his voice, as the sheep know the voice of their own shepherd, John x. 4. How readily doth the spouse say once and again, *It is the voice of my beloved*! Cant. ii. 8.—v. 2. He said, *ἐγώ εἰμι, I am he*. Or, *I am*; it is God's name, when he comes to deliver Israel, Exod. iii. 14. So it is Christ's, now he comes to deliver his disciples. When Christ said to those that came to apprehend him by force, *I am he*, they were struck down by it, John xviii. 6. When he saith to those that come to apprehend him by faith, *I am he*, they are raised up by it, and comforted.

6. He *went up to them into the ship*, embarked in the same bottom with them, and so made them perfectly easy. Let them but have their Master with them, and all is well. And as soon as he was come into the ship, *the wind ceased*. In the former storm that they were in, it is said, *he arose and rebuked the winds, and said to the sea, peace, be still*, chap. iv. 39. but here we read of no such formal command given, only the wind ceased all

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of a sudden. Note, Our Lord Jesus will be sure to do his own work always effectually, though not always alike solemnly, and with observation. Though we hear not the command given, yet if thus the wind cease, and we have the comfort of a calm, say, it is because Christ is in the ship, and his decree is gone forth, *or ever we are aware*, Cant. vi. 12. When we come with Christ to heaven, *the wind ceaseth* presently; there are no storms in the upper region.

7. They were more surprized and astonished at this miracle than did become them, and there was that at the bottom of their astonishment which was really culpable. *They were sore amazed in themselves*, were in a perfect *ecstasy*, as if it were a new and unaccountable thing, as if Christ had never done the like before, and they had no reason to expect he should do it now; they ought to *admire* the power of Christ, and to be confirmed hereby in their belief of his being the Son of God: but what needed all this *confusion* about it? It was, because they *considered not the miracle of the loaves*; had they given that its due weight, they would not have been so much surprized at this; for his multiplying the bread was as great an instance of his power, as his *walking on the water*. They were strangely stupid and unthinking, and *their heart was hardened*, or else they would not have thought it a thing incredible, that Christ should *command a calm*. It is for want of a right understanding of Christ's former works, that we are transported at the thought of his present works, as if there never were the like before.

Fifthly, When they came to the land of Genesaret, which lay between Bethsaida and Capernaum, the people bid them very welcome. *The men of that place* presently *knew Jesus*, ver. 54. and knew what mighty works he did wherever he came, what an universal healer he was; they *knew* likewise that he used to stay but a little while at a place, and therefore they were concerned to improve the opportunity of this kind visit he made them; *they ran through that whole region round about*, with all possible expedition, and *began to carry about in beds those that were sick*, and not able to go themselves, there was no danger of their getting cold when they hoped to get a cure; ver. 55. Let him go where he would he was crowded with patients, in the towns, in the cities, in the villages about the cities, they *laid the sick in the streets* to be in his way, and begged leave for them to touch, if it were but *the border of his garment*, as the woman with the bloody issue did, by whom it should seem this method of application was first brought in, *and as many as touched were made whole*. We do not find that they were desirous to be taught by him, only to be healed. If ministers could now cure peoples bodily diseases, what multitudes would attend them? but it is sad to think, how much more concerned the most of men are about their bodies, than about their souls.

## CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, we have, (1.) Christ's dispute with the scribes and Pharisees, about eating meat with unwashen hands, ver. 1—13. And the needful instructions he gave to the people upon that occasion, and further explained to his disciples, ver. 14—23. (2.) His curing the woman of Canaan's daughter, that was possessed, ver. 24—30. (3.) The relief of a man that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, ver. 31—37.

1. **T**HEN came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. 2. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled (that is to say, with unwashen) hands, they found fault. 3. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. 4. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. 5. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? 6. He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honour-eth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me. 7. Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 8. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. 9. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. 10. For



10. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother : and whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death. 11. But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban*, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me : *he shall be free*. 12. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother : 13. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered : and many such like things do ye. 14. ¶ And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Harken unto me every one of you, and understand. 15. There is nothing from without a man that entering into him can defile him : but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. 16. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. 17. And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. 18. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also ? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him, 19. Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats ? 20. And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness : 23. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

One great design of Christ's coming, was to set aside the ceremonial law, which God made, and to put an end to it, to make way for which he begins with the ceremonial law which men had made, and added to the law of God's making, and dischargeth his disciples from the obligation of that ; which here he doth fully upon occasion of the offence, which the Pharisees took at them for the violation of it. These Pharisees and scribes with whom he had this argument are said to *come from Jerusalem*, down to Galilee, fourscore or a hundred miles, to pick quarrels with our Saviour there, where they supposed him to have the greatest interest and reputation. Had they come so far to be taught by him, their zeal had been commendable, but to come so far to oppose him, and to check the progress of his gospel, was great wickedness. It should seem, that the scribes and Pharisees at Jerusalem pretended not only to a preeminence above, but to an authority over the country clergy, and therefore kept up their visitations, and sent inquisitors among them ; as they did to John when he appeared, *John i. 19*.

Now in this passage we may observe,

First, What the tradition of the elders was ; by it all were enjoined to *wash their hands* before meat ; a *cleanly* custom ; and no harm in it, and yet as such to be over-nice in it, discovers too great a care about the body, which is *of the earth* ; but they placed religion in it, and would not leave it *indifferent*, as it was in its own nature ; people were at their liberty to do it, or not to do it ; but they interposed their authority, and commanded all to do it upon pain of excommunication. This they kept up as a *tradition of the elders* ; the Papists pretend a zeal for the *authority* and *antiquity* of the church, and its canons, and talk much of *councils* and *fathers*, when really it is nothing but a zeal for their own wealth, interest, and dominion, that governs them ; and so it was with the Pharisees.

We have here an account of the practice of the Pharisees, and *all the Jews*, ver. 3, 4. (1.) They *washed their hands oft* ; they washed them, *πυγμῖν* ; the critics find a great deal of work about that word, some making it to note the frequency of their washing, so we render it ; others think it signifies the pains they took in washing their hands ; they washed with great care, they washed their hands *to their wrists*, so some ; they lifted up their hands when they were wet, that the water might run *to their elbows*. (2.) They particularly washed before they *eat bread*, i. e. before they sat down to a solemn meal ; for that was the rule ; they must be sure to wash before they eat the bread on which they begged a blessing. *Whoever eats the bread over which they recite the benediction, blessed be he that produceth bread, must wash his hands before and after*, or else he was thought to be defiled. (3.) They took special care when they came in from the markets to wash their hands ; from the judgment-halls, so some ; it signifies any place of concourse, where there were people of all sorts ; and it might be supposed some heathen or Jews under a ceremonial pollution, by coming near to whom they thought themselves polluted ; saying, *Stand by thy self, come not near me, I am holier than thou* ; *Isa. lxxv. 5*. They say the rule of the rabbins was, that if they washed their hands well in the morning the first thing they did, that would serve for all day, provided they kept alone ; but if they went into company,

they must not at their return either eat or pray, till they had *washed their hands* ; thus the elders *gained a reputation* among the people for sanctity, and thus they *exercised* and *kept up* an *authority* over their consciences. (4.) They added to this the washing of *cups* and *pots*, and *brazen vessels*, which they suspected had been made use of by heathens, or persons polluted ; nay, and the very *tables* on which they eat their meat. There were many cases in which, by the law of Moses, washings were appointed, but they *added* to them, and enforced the observation of their own impositions, as much as of God's institutions.

Secondly, What the practice of Christ's disciples was ; they knew what the law was, and the common usage ; but they understood themselves so well, that they would not be bound up by it : they eat bread with *defiled*, that is, with *unwashed*, hands, ver. 2. Eating with *unwashed* hands, they called eating with *defiled* hands ; thus men keep up their superstitious vanities, by putting every thing into an ill name, that contradicts them. The disciples knew (it is probable) that the Pharisees had their eye upon them, and yet they would not humour them by a compliance with their traditions, but took their liberty as at other times, and eat bread with *unwashed* hands ; and herein *their righteousness*, however it might seem to come short, did really *exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees*, Mat. v. 20.

Thirdly, The offence which the Pharisees took at this. They *found fault*, ver. 2. they censured them as profane, and men of a loose conversation, or rather as men that would not *submit to the power of the church*, to decree rites and ceremonies, and were therefore rebellious, factious, and schismatical. They brought a complaint against them to their Master, expecting that he should check them, and order them to conform, for they that are fond of their own inventions and impositions, are commonly ready to appeal to Christ, as if he should countenance them, and as if his authority must interpose for the enforcing of them, and the rebuking of those that do not comply with them. They do not ask, Why do not thy disciples *do as we do* ? Tho' that was it they meant, coveting to make themselves the standard ; but why do not they *walk according to the tradition of the elders* ? ver. 5. To which it was easy to answer, that by receiving the doctrine of Christ, they had *more understanding than all their teachers*, yea, *more than the ancients*, *Psal. cxix. 99, 100*.

Fourthly, Christ's vindication of them ; in which,

1. He argues with the Pharisees, concerning the *authority* by which this ceremony was *imposed* ; and they were the fittest to be discoursed with concerning that, who were the great flickers for it : but this he did not speak of *publicly* to the multitude (as appears by his *calling the people* to him, ver. 14.) lest he should have seemed to stir them up to *faction*, and *discontent* at their *governours*, but addressed it, as a reproof to the persons concerned, for the rule is, *Suum cuique*.

(1.) He reproves them for their hypocrisy in pretending to honour God, when really they had no such design, in their religious observances, ver. 6, 7. *They honour me with their lips*, they pretend it is for the glory of God, that they impose those things, to distinguish themselves from the heathen, but really *their heart is far from God*, and is governed by nothing but ambition and covetousness. They would be thought hereby to appropriate themselves, as a holy people to the Lord their God, when really it is the *furthest thing* in their thought. They rested in the *outside* of all their religious exercises, and their hearts were not right with God in them, and this was *worshipping God in vain*, for neither was he pleased with such sham-devotions, nor were they profited by them.

(2.) He reproves them for placing religion in the inventions and injunctions of their elders and rulers. They *taught for doctrines the traditions of men* ; when they should have been pressing upon people the great principles of religion, they were enforcing the canons of their church, and judged of peoples being Jews or no, according as they did or did not conform to them without any consideration had, whether they lived in obedience to God's laws or no. It was true, there were *divers washings* imposed by the law of Moses, *Heb. ix. 10*. which were intended to signify that inward purification of the heart from worldly fleshly lusts, which God requires as absolutely necessary to our communion with him ; but instead of providing the substance, they presumptuously added to the ceremony, and were very nice in *washing pots and cups*, and observe, he adds, *many other such like things ye do*, ver. 8. Note, Superstition is an endless thing. If one human invention and institution be admitted, though seemingly never so innocent, as this of washing hands, *behold, a troop comes*, a door is opened for many other *such things*.

(3.) He reproves them for *laying aside the commandment of God*, and over-looking that, not urging that in their preaching, and in their discipline conniving at the violation of that, as if that were no longer of force, ver. 8. Note, It is the mischief of impositions, that too often they who are zealous for them, have little zeal for the essential duties of religion, but can contentedly see them laid aside. Nay, They *rejected the commandment of God*, ver. 9. *You do fairly disannul and abolish the commandment of God* ; and even by your traditions *make the word of God*



of none effect, ver. 13. God's statutes shall not only *lie forgotten*, as antiquated obsolete laws, but they shall in effect *stand repealed*, that their *traditions* may take place. They were intrusted to expound the law, and to enforce it, and under pretence of using that power they violated the law, and dissolved the bonds of it; destroying the text with the comment.

This he gives them a particular instance of, and a flagrant one: God commanded children to *honour their parents*, not only by the law of Moses, but antecedent to that by the law of nature; and who *revileth*, or *speaketh evil* of father or mother, *let him die the death*, ver. 4. From whence it is easy to infer, that it is the duty of children, if their parents be poor, to relieve them according to their ability; and if those children are worthy to die that curse their parents, much more those that starve them. But if a man will but conform himself in all points to the tradition of the elders, they will find him out an expedient by which he may be discharged from this obligation, ver. 11. If his parents be in want, and he has wherewithal to help them, but has no mind to do it, let him swear by the Corban, that is by the *gold of the temple*, and the *gift upon the altar*, that his parents *shall not be profited* by him; that he will not relieve them; and if they ask any thing of him, let him tell them this, and it is enough; as if by the obligation of this wicked vow, he had discharged himself from the obligation of God's holy law; thus Dr. Hammond understands it: And it is said to be an ancient canon of the rabbins, That *vows take place in things commanded by the law, as well as in things indifferent*; so that if a man makes a vow which cannot be ratified without breaking a commandment, the vow must be ratified, and the commandment violated; so Dr. Whitby. Such doctrine as this the Papists teach, discharging children from all obligation to their parents by their *monastical vows*, and their *entrance into religion*, as they call it: He concludes, and *many such like things do ye*. Where will men stop when once they have made the word of God give way to their tradition? These eager imposers of such ceremonies, at first only *made light* of God's commandments in comparison with their traditions, but afterwards *made void* God's commandments, if they stood in competition with them. And all this in effect Isaiah prophesied of them; what he said of the hypocrites of his own day, was applicable to the scribes and Pharisees, ver. 6. Note, When we see and complain of the wickedness of the present times, yet we do not *enquire wisely of that matter*, if we say that all the former days were better than these, Eccles. vii. 10. The worst of hypocrites and evil doers have had their predecessors.

2. He instructs the people concerning the principles upon which this ceremony was grounded: And it was requisite that this part of his discourse should be publick, for it related to *daily practice*, and was designed to ratify a great mistake which the people were led into by their elders; he therefore *called the people unto him*, ver. 14. and bid them *hear and understand*. Note, It is not enough for the common people to hear, but they must *understand* what they hear. When Christ would run down the tradition of the Pharisees about washing before meat, he strikes at the opinion which was the root of it. Note, *Corrupt customs* are best cured by rectifying *corrupt notions*.

Now that which he goes about to set them right in, is, what the pollution is, which we are in danger of being damaged by, ver. 15. (1.) Not by the *meat we eat*, though it be eaten *with unwashed hands*, that is but *from without*, and goes through a man. But, (2.) It is by the breaking out of the corruption that is in our hearts; the mind and conscience is defiled, guilt is contracted, and we become odious in the sight of God by that which *comes out of us*; our wicked thoughts and affections, words and actions, these defile us, and these only: Our care must therefore be to *wash our hearts from wickedness*.

(3.) He gives his disciples in private an explication of the instructions he gave the people. They *asked* him, when they had him by himself, *concerning the parable*, ver. 17. for to them it seems it was a parable. Now in answer to their enquiry: (1.) He reproves their dulness. *Are ye so without understanding also?* Are you dull *also*? as dull as the people that *cannot understand*, as dull as the Pharisees that *will not*? Are ye *so* dull? He doth not expect they should understand every thing, but are you so weak as not to understand *this*? (2.) He explains this truth to them, that they might *perceive* it, and then they would *believe* it, for it carried its own evidence along with it. Some truths prove themselves, if they be but rightly explained and apprehended. If we understand the spiritual nature of God, and of his law, and what it is that is offensive to him, and diffits us for communion with him, we shall soon perceive, (1.) That that which we eat and drink *cannot defile* us, so as to call for any religious washing; it *goes into the stomach*, and passeth the several digestions and secretions that nature has appointed, and what here may be in it that is defiling, is *provided and gone*; *meats or the belly, and the belly for meats*, but *God shall destroy both it and them*. But, (2.) It is that which *comes out from the heart*, the corrupt heart, that defiles us: As by the ceremonial law, whatever (almost) comes out of a man defiles him, Lev. xv. 2: *Lev. xxiii. 13.* so what comes out from the mind of a man, that which defiles him before God, and calls for a religious abasing, ver. 21. *from within, out of the heart of man* which they

boast of the *goodness* of, and think is the best part of them; thence that which defiles doth proceed, thence comes all the mischief; as a corrupt fountain sends forth corrupt streams, so doth a corrupt heart send forth corrupt reasonings, corrupt appetites and passions, and all those wicked words and actions which are produced by them. Divers particulars are instanced in, as in Matthew, we had one there which is not here, and that is *false witness bearing*; but here are *seven* mentioned *here* to be added to those we had *there*. (1.) *Covetousness*, for it is plural; *πλεονεξίαι*, *immoderate desires* of more of the wealth of the world, and the gratifications of sense, and still more, still crying give, give. Hence we read of a heart *exercised with covetous practices*, 2 Pet. ii. 14. (2.) *Wickedness*, *πονηρίαι*, malice and hatred, and ill-will, a desire to do mischief, and a delight in mischief done. (3.) *Deceit*; which is wickedness covered and disguised, that it may be the more securely and effectually committed. (4.) *Lasciviousness*; that filthiness and foolish talking which the apostle condemns: The eye full of adultery, and all wanton dalliances. (5.) The *evil eye*; i. e. the envious eye, and the covetous eye, grudging others the good we give them, or do for them, Prov. xxiii. 6. or grieving at the good they do or enjoy. (6.) *Pride*; *ὕπερηφανία*, exalting ourselves in our own conceit above others, and looking down with scorn and contempt upon others. (7.) *Foolishness*; *ἀφροσύνη*, imprudence, inconsideration; some understand it especially of vain-glorious boasting, which St. Paul calls *foolishness*, 2 Cor. xi. 1, 19. because it is here joined with *pride*; I rather take it for that rashness in speaking and acting, which is the cause of so much evil. *Ill-thinking* is put first, as that which is the spring of all our commissions, and *unthinking* put last, as that which is the spring of all our omissions. Of all these he concludes, ver. 23. (1.) That they *come from within*, from the corrupt nature, the carnal mind, the evil treasure in the heart; justly is it said, That the *inward part is very wickedness*, it must needs be so when all this comes from within. (2.) That they *defile the man*, they render a man unfit for communion with God, they bring a stain upon the conscience; and if not mortified and rooted out, will shut men out of the new Jerusalem, into which no *unclean thing shall enter*.

24. ¶ And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it; but he could not be hid. 25. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: 26. (The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation) and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. 27. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the childrens bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. 28. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the childrens crumbs. 29. And he said unto her, For this saying, go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter. 30. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

See here, 1. How *humbly* Christ was pleased to *conceal himself*. Never man was so cried up as he was in Galilee, and therefore to teach us, though not to decline any opportunity of doing good, yet not to be fond of popular applause, he arose from thence and *went into the borders* of Tyre and Sidon, where he was little known; and there he entered not into a synagogue, or place of concourse, but *into a private house*, and he *would have no man know it*, because it was foretold concerning him, *he shall not strive nor cry, neither shall his voice be heard in the streets*. Not but that he was willing to preach and heal here as well as in other places, but for this he would be *sought unto*. Note, As there is a time to *appear*, so there is a time to *retire*: Or he would not be known, because he was upon the borders of Tyre and Sidon, among Gentiles, to whom he would not be so forward to shew himself, as to the tribes of Israel, whose glory he was to be.

2. How *graciously* he was pleased to *manifest himself* notwithstanding. Tho' he would not carry a harvest of miraculous cures into those parts, yet it should seem he came on purpose to drop a handful, to let fall this one which we have here an account of. *He could not be hid*; for though a candle may be put under a bushel, the sun cannot. Christ was too *well known* to be long *incognito* any where; the oil of gladness which he was anointed with, like the ointment of the right hand, would betray itself, and fill the house with its odours. Those that had only heard his fame could not converse with him, but they would soon say, This must be Jesus. Now observe,

1. The application made to him by a poor woman in distress and trouble. She was a Gentile, a Greek, a *stranger to the common-wealth of Israel*, an alien to the covenant of promise; she was by extraction a Syrophenician, and not in any degree profelyted



to the Jewish religion; she had a *daughter*, a young *daughter*, that was possessed *with the devil*. How many and grievous are the calamities that young children are subject to? Her address was, (1.) Very *humble, pressing, and importunate*; she *heard of him, and came and fell at his feet*. Note, Those that would obtain mercy from Christ, must throw themselves *at his feet*, i. e. must refer themselves to him, humble themselves before him, and give up themselves to be ruled by him. Christ never put any from him that *fell at his feet*, which a poor trembling soul may do that has not boldness and confidence to throw itself into his arms. (2.) It was very *particular*, she tells him what she wanted; Christ gave poor supplicants leave to be thus free with him, she besought him that he would *cast forth the devil out of her daughter*, ver. 26. Note, The greatest blessing we can ask of Christ for our children, is, that he would break the power of Satan, that is the power of sin in their souls; and particularly, that he would cast forth the *unclean spirit*, that they may be temples of the Holy Ghost, and he may dwell in them.

2. The discouragement he gave to this address, ver. 27. He said unto her, *Let the children first be filled*; let the Jews have all the miracles wrought for them that they have occasion for, who are in a particular manner God's chosen people; and let not that which was intended for them, be thrown to those who are not of God's family, and who have not that knowledge of him, and interest in him which they have; and who are as *dogs in comparison of them*, vile and profane, and who are as *dogs to them*, snarling at them, spiteful towards them, and ready to worry them. Note, Where Christ knows the faith of poor supplicants to be strong, he sometimes delights to try it, and put it to the stretch. But his saying, *Let the children first be filled*, intimates that there was mercy in reserve for the Gentiles, and not far off; for the Jews began already to be surfeited with the gospel of Christ, and some of them had desired him to *depart out of their coasts*. The children begin to play with their meat, and their leavings, their lothings, would be a feast for the Gentiles. The apostles went by this rule, *Let the children first be filled*, let the Jews have the first offer, and if their full souls lothe this honeycomb, *Lo, we turn to the Gentiles*!

3. The turn she gave to this word of Christ which made against her, and her improvement of it to make for her, ver. 28. She said, *Yes, Lord, I own it is true that the childrens bread ought not to be cast to the dogs, but they were never denied the crumbs of that bread*; nay, it belongs to them, and they are allowed a place *under the table*, that they may be ready to receive them; I ask not for a *loaf*, no, nor for a  *morsel*, only for a *crumb*, do not refuse me that. This she speaks not as undervaluing the mercy, or making light of it in itself, but magnifying the abundance of miraculous cures with which she heard the Jews were feasted, in comparison with which a single cure was but as a crumb. Gentiles do not come in crowds, as the Jews do; I come alone. Perhaps she had heard of Christ's feeding five thousand lately at once, after which, even when they had gathered up the fragments, there could not but be some crumbs left for the dogs.

4. The grant Christ thereupon made of her request: Is she thus humble, thus earnest? for *this saying, go thy way, thou shalt have what thou camest for, the devil is gone out of thy daughter*, ver. 29. This encourageth us to *pray*, and not to *faint*, to continue instant in prayer, not doubting but to prevail at last; the vision at the end shall *speak and not lie*. Christ's saying it *was done*, did it effectually, as at other times his saying, *Let it be done*; for, ver. 30. she *came to her house*, depending upon the word of Christ that her daughter was healed, and so she *found it, the devil was gone out*. Note, Christ can conquer Satan at a distance; and it was not only when the *dæmoniacks saw him* that they yielded to his power, as chap. iii. 11. but when they saw him not, for the Spirit of the Lord is not *bound, or bounded*. She found her daughter not in any toss or agitation, but very quietly *laid on the bed*, and repoling herself, waiting for her mother's return to rejoice with her, that she was so *finely well*.

31. ¶ And again departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. 32. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech: and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. 33. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue. 34. And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. 35. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. 36. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it, 37. And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

Our Lord Jesus seldom staid long in a place; for he knew where his work lay, and attended the changes of it. When he had cured the woman of Canaan's daughter, he had done what he had to do in that place, and therefore presently left those parts, and returned to the sea of Galilee, whereabout his usual residence was; yet did not come directly thither, but fetched a compass *through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis*, which lay mostly on the other side Jordan; such long walks did our Lord Jesus take, when he *went about doing good*.

Now here we have the story of a cure that Christ wrought, which is not recorded by any other of the evangelists; it is of one that was *deaf and dumb*.

1. His *case was sad*, ver. 32. There were those that brought to him one that was *deaf*, some think, born deaf, and then he must be dumb of course; others think, by some distemper, or disalter, he was become deaf, or at least thick of hearing; and he had an *impediment in his speech*. He was *μογιλάλος*; some think he was quite dumb; others, that he could not speak but with great difficulty to himself, and so as scarcely to be understood by those that heard him: He was *tongue-tied*, so that he was perfectly unfit for conversation, and deprived both of the pleasure and of the profit of it; he had not the satisfaction either of hearing other people talk, or of telling his own mind. Let us take occasion from hence to give thanks to God, for preserving to us the sense of hearing, especially that we may be capable of hearing the word of God; and the faculty of speech, especially that we may be capable of speaking God's praises; and let us look with compassion upon those that are deaf or dumb, and treat them with great tenderness. They that brought this poor man to Christ, besought him that he would *put his hand upon him*, as the prophets did upon those whom they *blessed* in the name of the Lord. It is not said, they besought him to *cure him*, but to *put his hand upon him*, to take cognizance of his case, and put forth his power to do to him as he pleased.

2. His *cure was solemn*, and some of the circumstances of it were singular.

1. Christ *took him aside from the multitude*, ver. 33. ordinarily he wrought his miracles publicly before all the people, to shew that they would bear the strictest scrutiny and inspection; but this he did privately, to shew that he did not *seek his own glory*, and to teach us to avoid every thing that favours of ostentation: Let us learn of Christ to be *humble*, and to do good where no eye sees, but his that is *all eye*.

2. He used more significant actions in the doing this cure than usual. (1.) He *put his fingers into his ears*, as if he would *syringe* them, and fetch out that which stopped them up. (2.) He *spit upon his own finger, and then touched his tongue*, as if he would *moisten* his mouth, and so loosen that with which his *tongue was tied*; these were no causes that could in the least contribute to his cure, but only *signs* of the exerting of that power which Christ had in himself to cure him, for the encouraging his faith, and theirs that brought him. The application was all from himself, it was his own *fingers* that he put into his ears, and his own *spittle* that he put upon his tongue; for he alone heals.

3. He *looked up to heaven*, to give his Father the praise of what he did; for he sought his praise, and did his will, and as Mediator acted in dependence on him, and with an eye to him. Thus he signified that it was by a divine power, a power he had as the Lord from heaven, and brought with him thence, that he did this; for the *hearing ear*, and the *seeing eye* the Lord has made, and can re-make, even both of them. He also hereby directed his patient who could *see*, tho' he could not *hear*, to look up to heaven for relief. Moses with his stammering tongue is directed to look that way, *Exod. iv. 11. Who hath made mans mouth? Or who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing or blind? Have not I the Lord?*

4. He *sighed*; not as if he found any difficulty in working this miracle, or obtaining power to do it from his Father; but thus he expresseth his pity of the miseries of human life, and his sympathy with the afflicted in their afflictions, as one that was himself *touched with the feeling of their infirmities*. And as to this man, he *sighed*, not because he was loth to do him this kindness, or did it with reluctancy; but because of the many temptations which he would be exposed to, and the sins he would be in danger of, the tongue sins, after the restoring of his speech to him, which before he was free from. He had better be *tongue-tied* still, unless he have grace to *keep his tongue as with a bridle*, Psal. xxxix. 1.

5. He said *Ephphatha*, that is, *Be opened*. This was nothing that looked like *spell*, or *charm*, such as they used that had *familiar spirits*, who *peeped and muttered*, Isa. viii. 19. Christ speaks as one having authority, and power went along with the word. *Be opened* served both parts of the cure; let the *ears be opened*, let the *lips be loosed*, let him hear and speak freely, and let the restraint be taken off, and the effect was answerable, ver. 35. *Straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue loosed, and all was well*: and happy he, who as soon as he had his hearing and speech, had the blessed Jesus so near him to converse with.

Now this cure was, (1.) A proof of Christ's being the Messiah, for it was foretold that by his power the *ears of the deaf should*



be unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb should be made to sing, Isa. xxxv. 5, 6. (2.) It was a specimen of the operations of his gospel upon the minds of men. The great command of the gospel, and grace of Christ to poor sinners, is *ephephatha*, be opened. Grotius applies it thus, that the internal impediments of the mind, are removed by the Spirit of Christ, as those bodily impediments were, by the word of his power. He opens the heart, as he did Lydia's, and thereby opens the ear to receive the word of God, and opens the mouth in prayer and praises.

6. He ordered it to be kept very private, but it was made very publick. (1.) It was his humility, that he charged them they should tell no man, ver. 36. *Most men will proclaim their own goodness*, or at least desire that others should proclaim it; but Christ, though he was himself in no danger of being puffed up with it, yet knowing that we are, would thus set us an example of self-denial, as in other things, so especially in praise and applause. We should take pleasure in doing good, but not in its being known. (2.) It was their zeal, that though he charged them to say nothing of it, yet they published it, before Christ would have had it published: But they meant honestly, and therefore it is to be reckoned rather an act of indiscretion, than an act of disobedience, ver. 37. But they that told it, and they that heard it, were beyond measure astonished, *ὑπερπερισσῶς*, more than above measure; they were exceedingly affected with it, and this was said by every body, it was the common verdict, *He has done all things well*, ver. 37. whereas there were those that hated and persecuted him as an evil-doer; they are ready to witness for him, not only that he has done no evil, but that he has done a great deal of good, and has done it well, modestly and humbly, and very devoutly, and all gratis, without money, and without price, which added much to the lustre of his good works. He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak, and that is well, it is well for them, it is well for their relations, to whom they had been a burthen; and therefore they are inexcusable who speak ill of him.

## C H A P. VIII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Christ's miraculous feeding four thousand, with seven loaves, and a few small fishes, ver 1—9. (2.) His refusing to give the Pharisees a sign from heaven, ver. 10—13. (3.) His cautioning his disciples to take heed of the leaven of Pharisaism, and Herodianism, ver. 14—21. (4.) His giving sight to a blind man at Bethsaida, ver. 22—26. (5.) Peter's confession of him, ver. 27—30. (6.) The notice he gave his disciples of his own approaching sufferings, ver. 31—33. and the warning he gave them to prepare for sufferings likewise, ver. 34—38.

**I**N those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, 2. I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: 3. And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. 4. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? 5. And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. 6. And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them: and they did set them before the people. 7. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. 8. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets. 9. And they that had eaten were about four thousand; and he sent them away.

We had the story of a miracle very like this before in this gospel, chap. vi. 35. and of this same miracle, Matt. xv. 32. and here is little or no addition, or alteration, as to the circumstances. Yet observe,

1. That our Lord Jesus was mightily followed. *The multitude was very great*, ver. 1. notwithstanding the wicked arts of the scribes and Pharisees to blemish him, and to blast his interest, the common people, who had more honesty, and therefore more true wisdom, than their leaders, kept up their high thoughts of him. We may suppose this multitude were generally of the meaner sort of people, with such Christ conversed, and was

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familiar; for thus he humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, and thus encouraged the meanest to come to him for life and grace.

2. Those that followed him underwent a great deal of difficulty in following him. *They were with him three days, and had nothing to eat*, that was hard service: Never let the Pharisees say, that *Christ's disciples fast not*. It is likely, there were those that brought some food with them from home, but by this time it was all spent, and they had a great way home, and yet they continued with Christ, and did not speak of leaving him, till he spoke of dismissing them. Note, True zeal makes nothing of hardships in the way of duty. They that have a full feast for their souls, may be content with slender provision for their bodies. It was an old saying among the Puritans, *Brown bread and the gospel is good fare*.

3. As Christ has a compassion for all that are in wants and straits, so he has a special concern for those that are reduced to straits by their zeal and diligence in attending on him. Christ said, *I have compassion on the multitude*; whom the proud Pharisees looked upon with disdain, the humble Jesus looked upon with pity and tenderness, and thus must we honour all men: But that which he chiefly considers is, *They have been with me three days, and have nothing to eat*. Whatever losses we sustain; or hardships we go through, for Christ's sake, and in love to him, he will take care they shall be made up to us one way or other. *They that seek the Lord, shall not long want any good thing*, Psal. xxxiv. 10. Observe with what sympathy Christ saith, ver. 3. *If I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way for hunger*. Christ knows and considers our frame; and he is for the body, if with it we glorify him, *verily we shall be fed*. He considered that many of them came from far, and had a great way home. When we see multitudes attending upon the word preached, it is comfortable to think that Christ knows whence they all come, though we do not. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest*, Rev. ii. 13. Christ would by no means have them go home fasting, for he doth not use to send those empty away from him, that in a right manner attend on him.

4. The doubts of Christians are sometimes made to work, for the magnifying of the power of Christ. The disciples could not imagine whence so many men should be satisfied with bread, here in this wilderness, ver. 4. That therefore must needs be wonderful, and appear so much the more so, which the disciples looked upon as impossible.

5. Christ's time to act for the relief of his people is, when things are brought to the last extremity, when they were ready to faint, Christ provided for them; that he might not invite them to follow him for the loaves, he did not supply them, but when they were utterly reduced, and then he sent them away.

6. The bounty of Christ is inexhaustible, and, to evidence that, Christ repeated this miracle, to shew that he is still the same for the succour and supply of his people that attend upon him. His favours are renewed, as our wants and necessities are. In the former miracle Christ used all the bread he had, which were five loaves, and fed all the guests he had, which were five thousand, and so he did now; though he might have said, If five loaves would feed five thousand, four may feed four thousand; he took all the seven loaves, and fed with them the four thousand, for he would teach us to take things as they are, and accommodate ourselves to them; to use what we have, and make the best of that which is: Here it was as in the dispensing of the manna, *he that gathered much, had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack*.

7. In our Father's house, in our Master's house there is bread enough, and to spare, there is a fulness in Christ, which he communicates to all that passeth through his hands; so that from it we receive, and grace for grace, John i. 16. Those need not fear wanting, that have a Christ to live upon.

8. It is good for those, that follow Christ, to keep together; these followers of Christ continued in a body, four thousand of them together, and Christ fed them all; Christ's sheep must abide by the flock, and go forth by their footsteps, and verily they shall be fed.

10. ¶ And straightway he entred into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

11. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. 12. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given to this generation. 13. And he left them, and entering into the ship again, departed to the other side. 14. ¶ Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. 15. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. 16. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.



bread. 17. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? 18. Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? 19. When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. 20. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. 21. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

Still Christ is upon motion; now he visits the parts of Dalmanutha, that no corner of the land of Israel might say, but that they had had his presence with them. He came thither *by ship*, ver. 13. but meeting with occasions of dispute there, and not with opportunities of doing good, he *entered into the ship again*, ver. 13. and came back. In these verses we are told,

1. How he refused to gratify the Pharisees, who challenged him to give them a *sign from heaven*. They came forth, on purpose to *question with him*, not to propose questions to him, that they might learn of him, but to cross questions with him, that they might ensnare him. (1.) They demanded of him a *sign from heaven*, as if the signs he gave them on earth, which were more familiar to them, and were more capable of being examined, and enquired into, were not sufficient. There was a sign from heaven at his baptism, in the descent of the dove, and the voice, *Matt. iii. 16, 17.* it was publick enough; and if they had attended John's baptism as they ought to have done, they might themselves have seen it. Afterwards, when he was nailed to the cross, they prescribed a new sign, *Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him*; thus obstinate infidelity will still have something to say, though never so unreasonable. They demanded this sign, *tempting him*, not in hopes he would give it them, that they might be satisfied, but in hopes he would not, that they might imagine themselves to have a pretence for their infidelity.

(2.) He denied them their demand. He *sighed deeply in his spirit*, ver. 12. He *groaned*, so some, being grieved for the *hardness of their hearts*, and the little influence that his preaching and miracles had had upon them. Note, The infidelity of those that have long enjoyed the means of conviction, is a great grief to the Lord Jesus; it troubles him that sinners should thus stand in their own light, and put a bar in their own door. (1.) He expostulates with them upon this demand; *why doth this generation seek after a sign?* This generation that is so unworthy to have the gospel brought to it, and to have any sign accompanying it; *this generation*, that so greedily swallows the traditions of the elders, without the confirmation of any sign at all. *This generation*, into which, by the calculating of the times prefixed in the Old Testament, they might easily perceive, that the coming of the Messiah must fall: *This generation*, that has had such plenty of sensible and merciful signs given them in the cure of their sick, what an absurdity is it, for them to desire a sign? (2.) He refuseth to answer their demand; *verily I say unto you, there shall no sign, no such sign, be given to this generation.* When God spoke to particular persons, in a particular case, out of the road of his common dispensation, they were encouraged to ask a sign, as Gideon and Ahaz; but when he speaks in general to all, as in the law and gospel, sending each with their own evidence, it is presumption to prescribe other signs than what he has given. *Shall any teach God knowledge?* He denied them, and then *left them*, as men not fit to be talked with; if they will not be convinced, they shall not; leave them to their strong delusions.

2. How he warned his disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees, and of Herod. Observe here,

1. What the caution was, *ver. 15. take heed, beware*, lest you partake of the *leaven of the Pharisees*, lest ye embrace the tradition of the elders, which they are so wedded to, lest you be proud, and hypocritical, and ceremonious like them; Matthew adds, *and of the Sadducees*; Mark adds, *and of Herod*, whence some gather, that Herod and his courtiers were generally Sadducees, that is, Deists, men of no religion. Others give this sense, the Pharisees demanded a *sign from heaven*; and Herod, he was long *desirous* to see some miracle wrought by Christ, *Luke xxiii. 7.* such as he should prescribe, so that the leaven of both was the same; they were unsatisfied with the signs they had, and would have others of their own devising; take heed of *this leaven*, saith Christ, be convinced by the miracles you have seen, and covet not to see more.

2. How they misunderstood this caution. It seems, at their putting to sea this time, they had *forgotten to take bread*, and *had not in their ship more than one loaf*, ver. 14. When therefore Christ bid them *beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*, they understood it as an intimation to them, not to apply themselves to any of the Pharisees for relief, when they came to the other side, for they had lately been offended at them, for eating with *unwashed hands*. They *reasoned among themselves*, what should be

the meaning of this caution, and concluded, *it is because we have no bread*; he saith this to reproach us for being so careless, as to go to sea, and go among strangers with but one loaf of bread; he doth in effect tell us, we must be brought to *short allowance*, and must eat our bread by weight. They *reasoned it*, *διελογίζοντο*, they *disputed* about it; one said it was long of you, and the other said, it was long of you, that we are so ill provided for this voyage; thus distrust of God makes Christ's disciples quarrel among themselves.

3. The reproof Christ gave them for their uneasiness in this matter, as it argued a disbelief of his power to supply them, notwithstanding the abundant experience they had had of it. The reproof is given with some warmth, for he knew their hearts, and knew they needed to be thus soundly chidden; *perceive ye not yet, neither understand*, that which you have had so many demonstrations of? *Have ye your hearts yet hardened*, so as nothing will make any impression upon them, or bring them to compliance with your Master's designs? *Having eyes, see ye not*, that which is plain before your eyes? *Having ears, hear ye not*, that which you have been so often told? How strangely stupid and senseless are you? *Do ye not remember*, that which was done but the other day, *when I brake the five loaves among the five thousand*, and soon after, *the seven loaves among the four thousand*? Do ye not remember *how many baskets full ye took up* of the fragments? Yes, they did remember, and could tell that they took up *twelve baskets full* one time, and *seven* another; why then saith he, *How is it that ye do not understand?* As if he that multiplied *five loaves*, and *seven*, could not multiply one; they seemed to suspect, that that one was not matter enough to work upon, if he should have a mind to entertain his hearers a third time. And if that was their thought, it was indeed a very senseless one, as if it were not all alike to the Lord, to save by many or few, and as easy to make one loaf to feed five thousand, as five. It was therefore proper to mind them, not only of the sufficiency, but of the overplus of the former meals; and justly were they chidden, for not understanding what Christ therein designed, and what they from thence might have learned. Note, (1.) The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us in the way of duty, greatly aggravate our distrust of him, which is therefore very provoking to the Lord Jesus. (2.) Our *not understanding* the true intent and meaning of God's favours to us, is equivalent to our not remembering them. (3.) We are therefore overwhelmed with present cares and distrusts, because we do not *understand*, and remember, what we have known and seen of the power and goodness of our Lord Jesus. It would be a great support to us, to *consider the days of old*, and we are wanting both to God and ourselves, if we do not. (4.) When we thus *forget the works of God*, and distrust him, we should chide ourselves severely for it, as Christ doth his disciples here; Am I thus without understanding? How is it that my heart is thus hardened?

22. ¶ And he cometh to Bethsaida, and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. 23. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. 24. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. 25. After that, he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. 26. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

This cure is related only by this evangelist, and there is something singular in the circumstances.

1. Here is a *blind man* brought to Christ by his friends, with a desire that he would *touch him*, ver. 22. Here appears the faith of those that brought him, they doubted not but one touch of Christ's hand, would recover him his sight; but the man himself shewed not that earnestness for, or expectation of, a cure, that other blind men did. If those that are spiritually blind do not pray for themselves, yet let their friends and relations pray for them, that Christ would be pleased to *touch them*.

2. Here is Christ *leading* this blind man, ver. 23. He did not bid his friends lead him, but (which speaks his wonderful condescension) he himself *took him by the hand and led him*, to teach us to be as Job was, *eyes to the blind*, Job xxix. 15. Never had poor blind man such a leader. He led him *out of the town*: Had he herein only designed privacy, he might have led him into a house, into an inner chamber, and have cured him there; but he intended hereby to upbraid Bethsaida, with the *mighty works* that had *in vain* been done *in her*, *Matt. xi. 21.* and was telling her, in effect, she was unworthy to have any more done within her walls. Perhaps Christ took the blind man *out of the town*, that he might have a larger prospect in the *open fields*, to try his sight with, than he could have in the *close streets*.

3. Here is the cure of the blind man, by that blessed Oculist, who came into the world, to *preach the recovering of sight*



to the blind; Luke iv. 18. and to give what he preached. In this cure we may observe, (1.) That Christ used a sign; he spat on his eyes, (spat into them, so some) and put his hands upon him. He could have cured him, as he did others, with a word speaking, but thus he was pleased to assist his faith which was very weak, and to help him against his unbelief. And this spittle signified the eye-salve wherewith Christ anoints the eyes of those that are spiritually blind, Rev. iii. 18. (2.) That the cure was wrought gradually, which was not usual in Christ's miracles. He asked him if he saw ought, ver. 23. Let him tell what condition his sight was in, for the satisfaction of those about him. And he looked up; so far he recovered his sight that he could open his eyes, and he said, I see men as trees walking, he could not distinguish men from trees, otherwise than that he could discern them to move. He had some glimmerings of sight, and betwixt and the sky could perceive a man erect like a tree, but could not discern the form thereof, Job iv. 16. But, (3.) It was soon completed; Christ never doth his work by the halves, nor leaves it till he can say, It is finished. He put his hands again upon his eyes to disperse the remaining darkness, and then had him look up again, and he saw every man clearly, ver. 25. Now Christ took this way, (1.) Because he would not tie himself to a method, but would shew with what liberty he acted in all he did. He did not cure by rote, as I may say, and in a road, but varied as he thought fit. Providence gains the same end in different ways, that men may attend its motions with an implicit faith. (2.) Because it should be to the patient according to his faith; and perhaps this man's faith was at first very weak, but afterwards gathered strength, and accordingly his cure was. Not that Christ always went by this rule, but thus he would sometimes put a rebuke upon those who came to him doubting. (3.) Thus Christ would shew how, and in what method, those are healed by his grace, who by nature are spiritually blind; at first their knowledge is confused, they see men as trees walking, but, like the light of the morning, it shines more and more to the perfect day, and then they see all things clearly, Prov. iv. 18. Let us enquire then, if we see ought of those things, which faith is the substance and evidence of; and if through grace we see any thing of them, we may hope that we shall see yet more and more, for Jesus Christ will perfect for ever those that are sanctified.

4. The directions Christ gave the man he had cured not to tell it to any in the town of Bethsaida, nor so much as to go into the town, where probably there were some expecting him to come back, who had seen Christ lead him out of the town; but having been eye-witnesses of so many miracles, had not so much as the curiosity to follow him: let not such be gratified with the sight of him when he was cured, that would not shew so much respect to Christ as to go a step out of town to see this cure wrought. Christ doth not forbid him to tell it to others, but he must not tell it to any in the town. Slighting Christ's favours is forfeiting them; and Christ will make those know the worth of their privileges by the want of them, that would not know them otherwise. Bethsaida, in the day of her visitation, would not know the things that belonged to her peace, and now they are hid from her eyes. They will not see, and therefore shall not see.

27. ¶ And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Cesarea-Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? 28. And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. 29. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. 30. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. 31. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. 33. But when he had turned about, and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. 34. ¶ And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospels, the same shall save it. 36. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 38. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful gene-

ration, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.

We have read a great deal of the doctrine that Christ preached, and the miracles he wrought, which were many, and strange, and well attested, of various kinds, wrought in several places to the astonishment of the many that were eye-witnesses of them. It is now time for us to pause a little, and to consider what these things mean; the wondrous works which Christ then forbade the publishing of being recorded in these sacred writings, are thereby published to all the world, to us, to all ages; now what shall we think of them? Is the record of those things designed only for an amusement, or to furnish us with matter for discourse? No, certainly these things are written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, John. xx. 31. and this discourse, Christ had with his disciples, will assist us in making the necessary reflexions upon the miracles of Christ, and a right use of them. Three things we are here taught to infer from the miracles Christ wrought.

First, They prove that he is the true Messiah, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world: this the works he did witnessed concerning him, and this his disciples, who were the eye-witnesses of those works, here profess their belief of, which cannot but be a satisfaction to us in making the same inference from them.

1. Christ enquired of them what the sentiments of the people were concerning him. Whom do men say that I am? ver. 27. Note, Tho' it is a small thing for us to be judged of man's day, yet it may sometimes do us good to know what people say of us, not that we may seek our own glory, but may hear of our faults. Christ asked them, not that he might be informed, but that they might observe it themselves, and inform one another.

2. The account they gave him was such as plainly speaks the high opinion the people had of him. Tho' they came short of the truth, yet they were convinced by his miracles that he was an extraordinary person, sent from the invisible world with a divine commission. It is probable, they would have acknowledged him to be the Messiah, if they had not been possessed by their teachers with a notion that the Messiah must be a temporal prince, appearing in external pomp and power, which the figure Christ made would not comport with; yet (whatever the Pharisees said, whose copyhold was touched by the strictness and spirituality of his doctrine) none of the people said he was a deceiver, but some said he was John Baptist, others Elias, others one of the prophets, ver. 28. All agree he is one risen from the dead.

3. The account they gave him of their own sentiments concerning him, speak their abundant satisfaction in him, and in their having left all to follow him, which now, after some time of trial, they see no reason to repent. But whom say ye that I am? To this they have an answer ready, Thou art the Christ, the Messiah often promised, and long expected, ver. 29. To be a Christian indeed is sincerely to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and to act accordingly; and that he is so, plainly appears by his wondrous works. This they knew, and must shortly publish and maintain, but for the present they must keep it secret, ver. 30. till the proof of it was completed, and they were completely qualified to maintain it by the pouring out of the Holy Ghost, and then let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus, whom he crucified, both Lord and Christ, Acts ii. 36.

Secondly, These miracles of Christ take off the offence of the cross, and assure us that Christ was in it not conquered, but a conqueror. Now the disciples are convinced that Jesus is the Christ, they may bear to hear of his sufferings, which Christ begins to give them notice of, ver. 31.

1. Christ taught his disciples that he must suffer many things; though they had got over the vulgar error of the Messiah's being a temporal prince, so far as to believe their Master to be the Messiah, notwithstanding his present meanness, yet still they retained it, so far as to expect that he would shortly appear in outward pomp and grandeur, and restore the kingdom to Israel; and therefore to rectify that mistake, Christ here gives them a prospect of the contrary, that he must be rejected of the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, who they expected should be brought to own and prefer him; that instead of being crowned, he must be killed, he must be crucified, and after three days he must rise again to a heavenly life, and to be no more in this world. This he spake openly, ver. 32. παρρησια. He said it freely and plainly, and did not wrap it up in ambiguous expressions. The disciples might easily understand it, if they had not been very much under the power of prejudice: or, it intimates that he spoke it cheerfully, and without any terror, and would have them to hear it so: he spake that saying boldly, as one that not only knew he must suffer and die, but was resolved he would, and made it his own act and deed.

2. Peter opposed it: he took him, and began to rebuke him. Here Peter shewed more love than discretion, a zeal for Christ and his safety, but not according to knowledge. He took him, περιλαβόμενος αὐτόν. He took hold of him, as it were to stop and hinder him, took him in his arms, and embraced him, so



some understand it; he fell on his neck as impatient to hear that his dear Master should suffer such hard things; or he took him aside privately, and began to rebuke him. This was not the language of the least authority, but of the greatest affection of that jealousy for the welfare of those we love, which is *strong as death*. Our Lord Jesus allowed his disciples to be free with him, but Peter here took too great a liberty.

3. Christ checked him for his opposition, *ver. 33*. He turned about as one offended, and looked on his disciples to see if the rest of them were of the same mind; and concurred with Peter in this, that if they did, they might take the reproof to themselves, which he was now about to give to Peter; and he said, *Get thee behind me, Satan*. Peter little thought to have had such a sharp rebuke for such a kind dissuasive, but perhaps expected as much commendation now for his love, as he had lately had for his faith. Note, Christ sees that amiss in what we say, and do which we our selves are not aware of, and knows what manner of spirit we are of, when we our selves do not. (1.) Peter spoke as one that did not rightly understand, nor had duly considered the purposes and counsels of God. When he saw such proofs, as he every day saw of the power of Christ, he might conclude that he could not be compelled to suffer, the most potent enemies could not over-power him, whom diseases and deaths, whom winds and waves, and devils themselves, were forced to obey and yield to: and when he saw so much of the wisdom of Christ every day, he might conclude that he would not chuse to suffer, but for some very great and glorious purposes; and therefore he ought not thus to have contradicted him, but to have acquiesced. He looked upon his death only as a martyrdom, like that of the prophets, which he thought might be prevented, if either he would take a little care not to provoke the chief priests, or to keep out of the way; but he knew not that the thing was necessary for the glory of God, the destruction of Satan, and the salvation of man, that the Captain of our salvation must be made perfect through sufferings, and so must bring many sons to glory. Note, The wisdom of man is perfect folly, when it pretends to give measures to the divine counsels: the cross of Christ, the greatest instance of God's power and wisdom, was to some a stumbling-block, and to others foolishness. (2.) Peter spoke as one that did not rightly understand, nor had duly considered the nature of Christ's kingdom; he took it to be temporal and human, whereas it is spiritual and divine. *Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*; & *pepovēis*, thou mindest not, so the word is rendered, *Rom. viii. 5*. Peter seemed to mind more the things that relate to the lower world, and the life that now is, than those which relate to the upper world, and the life to come. Minding the things of men more than the things of God; our own credit, ease, and safety, more than the things of God and his glory, and kingdom, is a very great sin, and the root of much sin, and very common among Christ's disciples; and it will appear in suffering-times, those times of temptation, when those in whom the things of men have the ascendant, are in danger of falling off. *Non sapiis, thou art not wise* (so it may be read) *in the things of God*, but in the things of men. It is considerable what generation we appear wise in, *Luke xvi. 8*. It seems policy to shun trouble, but if with that we shun duty, it is fleshly wisdom, *2 Cor. i. 12*. and it will be folly in the end.

Thirdly, These miracles of Christ should engage us all to follow him whatever it cost us, not only as they were confirmations of his mission, but as they were explications of his design, and the tendency of that grace which he came to bring; plainly intimating, that by his Spirit he would do that for our blind, deaf, lame, leprous, diseased, possessed souls, which he did for the bodies of those many who in those distresses applied themselves to him. Frequent notice had been taken of the great flocking that there was to him for help in various cases: now this is written that we may believe that he is the great physician of souls, and may become his patients, and submit to his regimen; and here he tells us upon what terms we may be admitted, and he called all the people to him to hear this, who modestly stood at some distance when he was in private conversation with his disciples. This is that which all are concerned to know, and consider, if they expect Christ should heal their souls.

1. They must not be indulgent of the ease of the body, for, *ver. 34*. *Whoever will come after me* for spiritual cures, as these people do for bodily cures, *let him deny himself*, and live a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world; let him not pretend to be his own physician, but renounce all confidence in himself and his own righteousness and strength, and let him take up his cross, conforming himself to the pattern of a crucified Jesus, and accommodating himself to the will of God in all the afflictions he lies under, and thus let him continue to follow me, as many of those did whom Christ healed: those that will be Christ's patients must attend on him, converse with him, receive instruction and reproof from him, as those did that followed him, and must resolve they will never forsake him.

2. They must not be solicitous, no not for the life of the body, when they cannot keep it without quitting Christ, *ver. 35*. Are we invited by the words and works of Christ to follow him,

let us sit down and count the cost, whether we can prefer our advantages by Christ before life itself, whether we can bear to think of losing our life for Christ's sake and the gospel's. When the devil is drawing away disciples and servants after him he conceals the worst of it, tells them only of the pleasure, but nothing of the peril of his service, *ye shall not surely die*; but what there is of trouble and danger in the service of Christ he tells us of it before, tells us we shall suffer, perhaps we shall die in the cause; and represents the discouragements not less, but greater than commonly they prove, that it may appear he deals fairly with us; and he is not afraid we should know the worst, because the advantages of his service abundantly suffice to balance the discouragements, if we will but impartially set the one over-against the other. In short,

1. We must not dread the loss of our lives, provided it be in the cause of Christ, *ver. 35*. *Whoever will save his life* by declining Christ, and refusing to come to him, or by disowning and denying him after he has in profession come to Christ, he shall lose it, shall lose the comfort of his natural life, the root and fountain of his spiritual life, and all his hopes of eternal life, such a bad bargain will he make for himself: but whoever shall lose his life, shall be truly willing to lose it, shall venture it, shall lay it down when he cannot keep it without denying Christ, he shall save it, i. e. he shall be an unspeakable gainer; for the loss of his life, shall be made up to him in a better life. It is looked upon to be some kind of recompence to those who lose their lives in the service of their prince and country, to have their memories honoured, and their families provided for; but what is that to the recompence, which Christ makes in eternal life to all that die for him?

2. We must dread the loss of our souls, yea, though we should gain the whole world by it, *ver. 36, 37*. *For what shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world*, and all the wealth, honour, and pleasure, in it by denying Christ, and lose his own soul. True it is, said bishop Hooper the night before he suffered martyrdom, that life is sweet, and death is bitter, but eternal death is more bitter, and eternal life is more sweet; so that as the happiness of heaven with Christ is enough to countervail the loss of life itself for Christ, so the gain of all the world in sin, is not sufficient to countervail the ruin of the soul by sin.

What that is that men do to save their lives, and gain the world, he tells us, *ver. 38*. and of what fatal consequence it will be to them, *Whoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed*. Something like this we had, *Mat. x. 33*. but it is here expressed more fully. Note, (1.) The disadvantage that the cause of Christ labours under in this world is, that it is to be owned and professed in an adulterous and sinful generation; such the generation of mankind is, gone a whoring from God, in the impure embraces of the world and the flesh, lying in wickedness; some ages, some places are more especially adulterous and sinful, as that was in which Christ lived: in such a generation the cause of Christ is opposed and run down, and those that own it are exposed to reproach and contempt, and every where ridiculed and spoken against. (2.) There are many, who though they cannot but own that the cause of Christ is a righteous cause, yet are ashamed of it because of the reproach that attends the professing of it; they are ashamed of their relation to Christ, and ashamed of the credit they cannot but give to his words; they cannot bear to be frowned upon and despised, and therefore throw off their profession, and go down the stream of a prevailing apostasy. (3.) There is a day coming when the cause of Christ will appear as bright and illustrious as now it appears mean and contemptible; when the Son of man comes in the glory of his Father with his holy angels, as the true Shechinah, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the Lord of angels. (4.) Those that are ashamed of Christ in this world where he is despised, he will be ashamed of them in that world where he is eternally adored. They shall not share with him in his glory then, that were not willing to share with him in his disgrace now.

## CHAP. IX.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Christ's transfiguration upon the mount, *ver. 1—13*. (2.) His casting the devil out of a child, when the disciples could not do it, *ver. 14—29*. (3.) His prediction of his own sufferings and death, *ver. 30—32*. (4.) The check he gave to his disciples for disputing who should be greatest, *ver. 33—37*. And to John for rebuking one who cast out devils in Christ's name, and did not follow with them, *ver. 38—41*. (5.) Christ's discourse with his disciples, of the danger of offending one of his little ones, *ver. 42*. and of indulging that in our selves which is an offence, and an occasion of sin to us, *ver. 43—50*. most of which passages we had before, *Mat. xvii. and xviii.*



1. **A**ND he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. 2. ¶ And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. 3. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. 4. And there appeared unto them Elias, with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. 5. And Peter answered, and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 6. For he wist not what to say, for they were sore afraid. 7. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. 8. And suddenly when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. 9. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son man were risen from the dead. 10. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. 11. ¶ And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? 12. And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things, and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. 13. But I say unto you, that Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

Here is, 1. A prediction of Christ's kingdom now near approaching, *ver. 1.* That which is foretold is, (1.) That the kingdom of God would come, and would come so as to be seen; the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up in the world by the utter destruction of the Jewish polity, which stood in the way of it; this was the restoring of the kingdom of God among men, which had been in a manner lost by the woful degeneracy both of Jews and Gentiles. (2.) That it would come *with power*, so as to make its own way, and bear down the opposition that was given to it. It came *with power* when vengeance was taken on the Jews for crucifying Christ, and when it conquered the idolatry of the Gentile world. (3.) That it would come while some now present were alive. There are some *standing here that shall not taste of death till they see it*; this speaks the same with *Mat. xxiv. 34.* This generation shall not pass, till all those things be fulfilled. Those that were standing here with Christ should see it, when the others could not discern it to be the kingdom of God, for it came not with observation.

2. A specimen of that kingdom in the transfiguration of Christ, *six days* after Christ spoke that. He had begun to give notice to his disciples of his death and sufferings; and to prevent their offence at that, he gives them this glimpse of his glory, to shew that his sufferings were voluntary, and what a virtue the dignity and glory of his person would put into them, and to prevent the offence of the cross.

1. It was on the top of a *high mountain*, like the converse Moses had with God, which was on the top of mount Sinai, and his prospect of Canaan from the top of mount Pisgah. Tradition saith it was on the top of mount Tabor that Christ was transfigured; and if so, the scripture was fulfilled, Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name, *Psal. lxxxix. 12, 13.* Dr. Lightfoot observing that the last place where we find Christ, was in the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, which was far from mount Tabor, rather thinks it was a high mountain which Josephus speaks of near Cæsarea.

2. The witnesses of it were Peter, James, and John, these were *three* that were to bear record on earth answering to Moses, Elias, and the voice from heaven, the three that were to bear record from above. Christ did not take all the disciples with him, because the thing was to be kept very private. As there are distinguishing favours which are given to disciples, and not to the world, so there are to some disciples and not to others. All the saints are a people *near to Christ*, but some lie in his bosom. James was the first of all the twelve that died for Christ, and John survived them all to be the last eye-witness of this glory; he bore record, *John i. 14.* We saw his glory, and so did Peter, *2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18.*

3. The manner of it. *He was transfigured before them*: he appeared in another manner than he used to do. This was a change of the accidents, the substance remaining the same, and it was a miracle: But transubstantiation, the change of the substance, all the accidents remaining, the same is not a miracle, but a fraud and imposture, such a work as Christ never wrought.

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See what a great change human bodies are capable of when God is pleased to put an honour upon them, as he will upon the bodies of the saints at the resurrection. He was transfigured *before them*; it is likely the change was *gradual*, from glory to glory, so that the disciples, who had their eye upon him all the while, had the clearest and most certain evidence they could have, that this glorious appearance was no other than the blessed Jesus himself, and there was no illusion in it. John seems to refer to this, *1 John i. 1.* when he speaks of the word of life, as that which they had *seen with their eyes, and looked upon.* His raiment became *shining*; so that though probably it was sad coloured, if not black, yet it was now *exceeding white as snow*, beyond what the fuller's arts could do towards whitening it.

4. His companions in this glory were Moses and Elias, *ver. 4.* They appeared *talking with him*, not to teach him, but to testify to him, and to be taught by him; by which it appears there is converse and intercourse between glorified saints, they have ways of talking one with another which we understand not. Moses and Elias lived at a great distance of time one from another, but that breaks no squares in heaven, where the *first shall be last, and the last first*, that is, all one in Christ.

5. The great delight that the disciples took in seeing this sight, and hearing this discourse, is expressed by Peter the mouth of the rest. He said, *Master, it is good for us to be here*, *ver. 5.* Though Christ was transfigured, and was in discourse with Moses and Elias, yet he gave Peter leave to speak to him, and to be as free with him as he used to be. Note, Our Lord Jesus in his exaltation and glory, doth not at all abate of his condescending kindness to his people. Many when they are in their greatness oblige their friends to keep their distance, but even to the glorified Jesus true believers have access with boldness, and freedom of speech with him. Even in this heavenly discourse there was room for Peter to put in a word; and this is it, Lord, *It is good to be here*, it is good for us to be here: Here let us make tabernacles; let this be our rest for ever. Note, Gracious souls reckon it good to be in communion with Christ, good to be near him, good to be *in the mount* with him, though it be a cold and solitary place; it is good to be here retired from the world, and alone with Christ: and if it is good to be with Christ transfigured, only upon a mountain with Moses and Elias, how good will it be to be with Christ glorified in heaven with all the saints? But observe, while Peter was for staying here, he forgot what need there was of the presence of Christ, and the preaching of his apostles among the people. At this very time the other disciples wanted them greatly, *ver. 14.* Note, When it is well with us, we are apt to be mindless of others, and in the fulness of our enjoyments to forget the necessities of our brethren; it was a weakness in Peter to prefer private communion with God before public usefulness. Paul is willing to *abide in the flesh*, rather than depart to the mountain of glory, (though that be far better) when he sees it needful for the church, *Phil. i. 24, 25.* Peter talked of making three distinct tabernacles for Moses, Elias, and Christ, which was not well contrived; for such a perfect harmony there is between the law, the prophets, and the gospel, that one tabernacle will hold them all; they dwell together in unity. But whatever was incongruous in what he said, he may be excused, for they were all *sore afraid*; and he for his part *wist not what to say*, *ver. 6.* not knowing what would be the end thereof.

6. The voice that came from heaven was an attestation of Christ's mediatorship, *ver. 7.* There was a cloud that overshadowed them, and was a shelter to them: Peter had talked of making tabernacles for Christ and his friends, but while he yet spake, see how his project was superseded; this cloud was unto them instead of tabernacles for their shelter, *Isa. iv. 5.* while he spake of his tabernacles, God created his tabernacle *not made with hands.* Now out of this cloud (which was but a shade to the excellent glory Peter speaks of, from whence *this voice* came) it was said, *This is my beloved Son, hear him.* God owns him, and accepts him as his beloved Son, and is ready to accept of us in him; we must then own and accept him as our beloved Saviour, and must give up our selves to be ruled by him.

7. The vision being designed only to introduce this voice, when that was delivered, disappeared, *ver. 8.* Suddenly when they had looked round about, as men amazed to see where they were, all was gone, they saw no man any more, Elias and Moses were vanished out of sight, and Jesus only remained with them, and he not transfigured; but as he used to be. Note, Christ doth not leave the soul, when extraordinary joys and comforts leave it. Though more sensible and ravishing communions may be withdrawn, Christ's disciples have, and shall have his ordinary presence with them always, even to the end of the world, and that is it we must depend upon. Let us thank God for *daily bread*, and not expect a continual feast on this side heaven.

8. We have here the discourse between Christ and his disciples, as they came down from the mount.

1. He charged them to keep this matter very private till he was risen from the dead, which would complete the proof of his divine mission, and then this must be produced with the rest of the evidence, *ver. 9.* And besides, he being now in a state of humiliation, would have nothing publicly taken notice of that might seem



seem disagreeable to such a state; for to that, he would in every thing accommodate himself. This enjoining of silence to the disciples, would likewise be of use to them to prevent their boasting of the intimacy they were admitted to, that they might not be *puffed up* with the *abundance of the revelations*. It is a mortification to a man to be tied up from telling of his advancements, and may help to hide pride from him.

2. The disciples were at a loss what the *rising from the dead* should mean; they could not form any notion of the Messiah's dying, *Luke xviii. 34.* and therefore were willing to think that the *rising* he speaks of was figurative, his rising from his present mean and low estate to the dignity and dominion they were in expectation of. But if so, here is another thing that embarrasseth them, *ver. 11.* *Why, say the scribes,* that before the appearing of the Messiah in his glory, according to the order settled in the prophecies of the Old Testament, *Elias must first come*; but Elias was gone, and Moses too: Now that which raised this difficulty was, that the scribes taught them to expect the person of Elias, whereas the prophecy intended one *in the spirit and power of Elias*. Note, The misunderstanding of scripture is a great prejudice to the entertainment of truth.

3. Christ gave them a key to the prophecy concerning Elias, *ver. 17, 18.* It is indeed prophesied that Elias will come, and will *restore all things*, and set them to rights; and (though you will not understand it) it is also prophesied of the *Son of man* that he must *suffer many things*, and be *set at nought*, must be a reproach of men, and despised of the people: And though the scribes do not tell you so, the *scriptures* do, and you have as much reason to expect that as the other, and should not *make so strange* of it; but as to Elias, I tell you, *he is come*; and if you consider a little, you will understand who I mean, it is one to whom they have *done whatsoever they listed*, which was very applicable to the ill usage they had given John Baptist. Many of the ancients, and the Popish writers generally, think, that besides the coming of John Baptist in the spirit of Elias, himself in his own person is to be expected, with Enoch, before the second appearance of Christ, wherein the prophecy of Malachi will have a more full accomplishment than it had in John Baptist. But it is a groundless fancy; the true Elias, as well as the true Messiah, promised is come, and we are to look for *no other*. These words, *as it is written of him*, refer not to their *doing to him whatever they listed*, that comes in in a parenthesis, but only to his coming: He is come, and hath been, and done according as was *written of him*.

14. ¶ And when he came to *his* disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. 15. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him, saluted him. 16. And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? 17. And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit: 18. And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he fometh, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples, that they should cast him out, and they could not. 19. He answered him, and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. 20. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him, and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. 21. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. 22. And oft-times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. 23. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. 24. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. 25. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, Come out of him, and enter no more into him. 26. And *the spirit* cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him; and he was as one dead, insomuch that many said, He is dead. 27. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up, and he arose. 28. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? 29. And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

We have here the story of Christ's casting the devil out of a child, somewhat more fully related than it was *Mat. xvii. 14, &c.* Observe here,

1. Christ's return to his disciples, and the perplexity he found them in. He laid aside his robes of glory, and came to look after his family, and to enquire what was become of them. Christ's glory above doth not make him forget the concerns of his church below, which he visits in *great humility*, *ver. 14.* And he came very seasonably, when the disciples were embarrassed and run a-ground; the scribes who were sworn enemies both to him and them, had gained an advantage against them: A child possessed with a devil was brought to them, and they could not cast out the devil, whereupon the scribes insulted over them, and reflected upon their Master, and triumphed as if the day were their own. He *found the scribes questioning with them*, in the hearing of the multitude, some of whom perhaps began to be shocked by it. Thus Moses, when he came down from the mount, found the camp of Israel in great disorder, so soon were Christ and Moses missed. Christ's return was very welcome, no doubt, to the disciples, and unwelcome to the scribes. But particular notice is taken of its being very surprizing to the people, who perhaps were ready to say, *As for this Jesus, we wot not what is become of him*; but when they *beheld him* coming to them again, they were *greatly amazed*; some copies add, *καὶ ἐξέπε- βήθησαν*, and they were afraid, and running to him; some copies for *προσπρέχοντες* read *προσχαίροντες*, congratulating him, or bidding him welcome they saluted him. It is easy to give a reason why they should be glad to see him; but why were they *amazed*, *greatly amazed*, when they beheld him? Probably, there might remain something unusual in his countenance; as Moses's face shone when he came down from the mount, which made the people afraid to come nigh him, *Exod. xxxiv. 30.* So perhaps did Christ's face in some measure; at least, instead of seeming fatigued, there appeared a wonderful briskness, and sprightliness in his looks, which *amazed* them.

2. The case which perplexed the disciples brought before him. He asked the scribes, who he knew were always *vexatious* to his disciples, and *teazing* them upon every occasion, *What question ye with them?* What is the quarrel now? The scribes made no answer, for they were confounded at his presence; the disciples made none, for they were comforted, and now left all to him. But the father of the child opened the cause, *ver. 17, 18.* (1.) His child is possessed with a *dumb spirit*. He has the falling-sickness, and in his fits is *speechless*; his case is very sad, for wheresoever the fit takes him, the spirit *tears* him, throws him into such violent convulsions as almost pull him to pieces; and which is very grievous to himself, and frightful to those about him, *he fomes* at the mouth, and *gnasheth with his teeth*, as one in pain and great misery; and though the fits go off presently, yet they leave him so weak that he *pineth away*, is worn to a skeleton; his flesh is *dried away*, so the word signifies, *Psal. cii. 3, 4, 5.* This was a constant affliction to a tender father. (2.) The disciples cannot give him any relief. *I desired they would cast him out*, as they had done many, and they would willingly have done it, but *they could not*; and therefore thou couldst never have come in better time, *Master, I have brought him to thee.*

3. The rebuke he gave to them all, *ver. 19.* O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Dr. Hammond understands this as spoken to the disciples, reproving them for not exerting the power he had given them, and because they did not *fast* and *pray*, as in some cases he had directed them to do. But Dr. Whitby takes it as a rebuke to the scribes, who gloried in this balk that the disciples met with, and hoped to run them down with it. Then he calls a *faithless generation*, and speaks as one weary of *being with them*, and of *bearing with them*. We never hear him complaining how long shall I be in this low condition, and suffer that? But how long shall I be among these *faithless* people, and suffer them?

4. The deplorable condition that the child was actually in, when he was brought to Christ, and the doleful representation which the father made of it. When the child saw Christ, he fell into a fit, *the spirit straightway tore him, boiled within him, troubled him*, so Dr. Hammond; as if the devil would set Christ at defiance, and hoped to be too hard for him too, and to keep possession in spite of him. The child *fell on the ground and wallowed foaming*. We may put another construction upon it, that the devil raged, and had so much the greater wrath, because he *knew* that *his time was short*, *Rev. xii. 12.* Christ asked, *How long since this came to him?* And it seems the disease was of long standing, it came to him *of a child*, *ver. 21.* which made the case the more sad, and the cure the more difficult. We are all by nature *children of disobedience*, and in such the evil spirit *works*, and has done so from our childhood; for *foolishness is bound in the heart of a child*, and nothing but the mighty grace of Christ can cast it out.

5. The *pressing instances* which the father of the child makes with Christ for a cure, *ver. 22.* *Oft-times it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him.* Note, The devil aims at the ruin of those in whom he rules and works, and seeks *whom he may devour*. But if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. The leper was confident of Christ's power, but put an *if* upon his will, *Mat. viii. 2.* *If thou wilt, thou canst.* This



This poor man referred himself to his good-will, but put an *if* upon his power, because his disciples, who cast out devils *in his name*, had been non-plussed in this case. Thus Christ suffers in his honour by the difficulties and follies of his disciples.

6. The answer Christ gave to his address, *ver. 23. If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.* Here, (1.) He tacitly checks the weakness of his faith. He put it upon Christ's power, *If thou canst do any thing*, and reflected on the want of power in the disciples; but Christ turns it upon him, and puts him upon questioning his own faith, and will have him impute the disappointment to the want of that; *if thou canst believe.* (2.) He graciously encourageth the strength of his desire; *all things are possible*, i. e. will appear possible to him that believes the almighty power of God, to which all things are possible, or, that shall be done by the grace of God, for them that believe in the promise of God, which seemed utterly impossible. Note, In dealing with Christ, very much is put upon our believing, and very much promised to it. *Canst thou believe*, i. e. darest thou believe? Art thou willing to venture thy all in the hands of Christ? To venture all thy spiritual concerns with him, and all thy temporal concerns for him? Canst thou find in thy heart to do this? If so, it is not impossible; but that though thou hast been a great sinner, thou mayst be reconciled; though thou art very mean and unworthy, thou mayest get to heaven. *If thou canst believe*, it is possible that thy hard heart may be softened, thy spiritual diseases may be cured; and that, weak as thou art, thou mayest be able to hold out to the end.

7. The profession of faith which the poor man made hereupon, *ver. 24. he cried out, Lord, I believe*, I am fully persuaded both of thy power, and of thy pity; it shall never stick at that, *Lord, I believe*. And the prayer he made for grace to enable him more firmly to rely upon the assurances he had of the ability, and willingness of Christ to save, *Help thou my unbelief.* Note, 1. Even those who through grace can say, *Lord, I believe*, yet have reason to complain of their unbelief; that they cannot so readily apply to themselves, and their own case, the word of Christ as they should, nor so cheerfully depend upon it. 2. Those that complain of unbelief, must look up to Christ for grace to help them against it, and his grace shall be sufficient for them. *Help mine unbelief*, help me to a pardon for it, help me with power against it; help out what is wanting in my faith with thy grace, the strength of which is perfected in our weakness.

8. The cure of the child, and the conquest of this raging devil in the child. Christ *saw the people come running together*, expecting to see the issue of this trial of skill, and therefore kept them in suspense no longer, but rebuked the foul spirit, the unclean spirit, so it should be rendered as in other places. Observe, (1.) What the charge was which Christ gave to this unclean spirit. *Thou dumb and deaf spirit*, that makest the poor child dumb and deaf, but shalt thy self be made to hear thy doom, and not be able to say any thing against it, *Come out of him immediately*, and enter no more into him. Let him not only be brought out of his fit, but let his fits never return. Note, Whom Christ cures, he cures effectually. Satan may go out himself, and yet recover possession; but if Christ cast him out, he will keep him out. (2.) How the unclean spirit took it; he grew yet more outrageous, he *cried*, and *rent him sore*, gave him such a twist at parting, that he was *as one dead*; so loth was he to quit his hold, and so exasperated at the superior power of Christ; and so malicious to the child, and so fain he would have killed him, *Many said, he is dead.* Thus the tocs that a soul is in at the breaking of Satan's power in it, may, perhaps, be frightful for the present, but opens the door to lasting comfort. (3.) How the child was perfectly restored; *ver. 27. Jesus took him by the hand*, *ex-thous*, took fast hold of him, and strongly bore him up, and he arose and recovered, and all was well.

9. The reason he gave to the disciples, why they could not cast out this devil: They enquired of him privately, *why they could not*, that wherein they were defective might be made up another time, and they might not be again thus publicly shamed; and he told them, *ver. 29. This kind can come forth by nothing*, but *prayer and fasting.* Whatever other difference there really might be, none appears between this and other kinds, but that the unclean spirit had had possession of this poor patient *from a child*, and that strengthened his interest, and confirmed his hold. When *vitious habits* are rooted by long usage, and begin to plead prescription, like chronical diseases they are *hardly cured.* Can the *Ethiopian change his skin*? The disciples must not think to do their work always with a like ease: some services call them to take more than ordinary pains; but Christ can do that with a word's speaking, which they must prevail for the doing of by *prayer and fasting.*

30. ¶ And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. 31. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. 32. But they understood

not that saying, and were afraid to ask him. 33. ¶ And he came to Capernaum, and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34. But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. 35. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and said unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. 36. And he took a child and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, 37. Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me. 38. ¶ And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. 39. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. 40. For he that is not against us, is on our part.

Here, 1. Christ foretels his own approaching sufferings. He passed through Galilee with more expedition than usual, and would not that any man should know it, *ver. 30.* because he had done many mighty and good works among them in vain, they shall not be invited to see them, and have the benefit of them as they have been. The time of his sufferings drew nigh, and therefore he was willing to be private a while; and to converse only with his disciples, to prepare them for the approaching trial, *ver. 31.* He said to them, the Son of man is delivered, by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, into the hands of men, *ver. 31.* and they shall kill him. Had he been delivered into the hands of devils, and they had worried him, it had not been so strange, but that men who have reason, and should have love, that they should be thus spiteful to the Son of man, who came to redeem and save them, is unaccountable. But still it is observable, that when Christ spoke of his death, he always spoke of his resurrection, which took away the reproach of it from himself, and should take away the grief of it from his disciples. But they understood not that saying, *ver. 32.* The words were plain enough, but they could not be reconciled to the thing, and therefore would suppose them to have some mystical meaning which they did not understand; and they were afraid to ask him; not because he was difficult of access, or stern to those who consulted him, but either, because they were loth to know the truth, or because they expected to be chidden for their backwardness to receive it. Many remain ignorant, because they are ashamed to enquire.

2. He rebukes his disciples for magnifying themselves. When he came to Capernaum, he privately asked his disciples, what it was that they disputed among themselves by the way, *ver. 33.* He knew very well what the dispute was, but he would know it from them, and would have them to confess their fault and folly in it. Note, (1.) We must all expect to be called to an account by our Lord Jesus, concerning what passeth while we are in the way, in this state of passage and probation. (2.) We must, in a particular manner, be called to an account about our discourses among ourselves, for by our words we must be justified or condemned. (3.) As other our discourses among ourselves by the way, so especially our disputes will be all called over again, and we shall be called to an account about them. (4.) Of all disputes, Christ will be sure to reckon with his disciples for their disputes about precedency, and superiority: That was the subject of the debate here, *who should be the greatest*, *ver. 34.* Nothing could be more contrary to the two great laws of Christ's kingdom, lessons of his school, and instructions of his example, which are *humility and love*, than desiring preferment in the world, and disputing about it. This ill temper he took all occasions to check, both because it arose from a mistaken notion of his kingdom, as if it were of this world; and because it tended so directly to the debasing of the honour, and the corrupting of the purity of his gospel, and he foresaw would be so much the bane of the church.

Now, 1. They were willing to cover this fault, *ver. 34.* they held their peace. As they would not ask, *ver. 32.* because they were ashamed to own their ignorance, so here they would not answer, because they were ashamed to own their pride. (2.) He was willing to amend this fault in them, and to bring them to a better temper; and therefore sat down, that he might have a solemn and full discourse with them about this matter; he called the twelve to him, and told them, (1.) That ambition and affectation of dignity and dominion, instead of gaining them preferment in his kingdom, would but postpone their preferment; *If any man desire and aim to be first, he shall be last*; he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and mens pride shall bring them low. (2.) That there is no preferment to be had under him, but an opportunity for, and an obligation to, so much the more labour and condescension. *If any man desire to be first*, when he is so, he must be so much the more busy, and serviceable to every



every body; *he that desires the office of a bishop, desires a good work*, for he must, as St. Paul did, labour the more abundantly, and make himself the *servant of all*. (3.) That those who are most humble and self-denying do most resemble Christ, and shall be most tenderly owned by him. This he taught them by a sign, *he took a child in his arms*, that had nothing of pride and ambition in it, Look you, saith he, *whoever shall receive one like this child, receives me*. Those of a humble, meek, mild disposition, are such as I will own and countenance, and encourage every body else to do so too, and will take what is done to them as done to myself; and so will my Father too, for he who thus *receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me*, and it shall be placed to his account, and repaid with interest.

3. He rebukes them for *vilifying all but themselves*; while they are striving which of them should be greatest, they will not allow those who are not in communion with them to be any thing. Observe,

1. The account which John gave him, of the restraint they had laid upon one from making use of the name of Christ, because he was not of their society. Though they were ashamed to own their contests for preferment, they seem to boast of this exercise of their authority, and expected their Master could not only justify them in it, but commend them for it; and hoped he would not blame them for desiring to be great, when they would thus use their power for the maintaining of the honour of the sacred college, *Master*, saith John, *we saw one casting out devils in thy name, but he followed not us*, ver. 38. (1.) It was strange, that one that was not a professed disciple and follower of Christ, should yet have power to *cast out devils* in his name, for that seemed to be peculiar to those whom he called, *chap. vi. 7*. But some think, that he was a disciple of John, who made use of the name of the Messiah, not as come, but as near at hand, not knowing that Jesus was he; it should rather seem he made use of the name of Jesus, believing him to be the Christ, as the other apostles did: And why might not he receive that power from Christ, whose Spirit, like the wind, *blows where it listeth*, without such an outward call as the apostles had, and perhaps, there were many more such: Christ's grace is not tied to the visible church. (2.) It was strange, that one who *cast out devils* in the name of Christ, did not join himself to the apostles, and follow Christ with them, but should continue to act in *separation* from them. I know of nothing that could hinder him from following them, unless because he was loth to leave all to follow them; and if so, that was an ill principle. The thing did not look well, and therefore the disciples *forbad him* to make use of Christ's name as they did, unless he would follow him as they did. This was like the motion Joshua made concerning Eldad and Medad, that prophesied in the camp, and went not up with the rest to the door of the tabernacle, *My Lord Moses, forbid them*, Numb. xi. 28. Restrain them, silence them, for it is a schism. Thus apt are we to imagine, that those do not follow Christ at all, that do not follow him *with us*, and that those do nothing well, who do not just as we do. But the *Lord knows them that are his*, however they are dispersed; and this instance gives us a needful caution, to take heed we be carried by an excess of zeal for the unity of the church, and for that which we are sure is right and good, to oppose that which yet may tend to the enlargement of the church, and the advancement of its true interests another way.

2. The rebuke he gave to them for this, *ver. 39. Jesus said, forbid him not*, nor any other that do likewise. This was like the check Moses gave to Joshua, *enquirest thou for my sake?* Note, That which is good and doth good must not be prohibited, though there may be some defect or irregularity in the manner of doing it. *Casting out devils*, and so destroying Satan's kingdom, doing this *in Christ's name*, and so owning him to be sent of God, and giving honour to him as the fountain of grace, preaching down sin, and preaching up Christ, are good things, very good things which ought not to be forbidden to any, merely because they *follow not with us*. If Christ be preached, Paul therein doth and will rejoice, though he be eclipsed by it, *Phil. i. 18*. Two reasons Christ gives, why such should not be forbidden. (1.) Because we cannot suppose, that any man that makes use of Christ's name in working miracles, should blaspheme his name, as the Scribes and Pharisees did. There were those indeed, that did *in Christ's name cast out devils*, and yet in other respects were *workers of iniquity*, but they did not *speak evil of Christ*. (2.) Because those that differed in communion, while they agreed to fight against Satan, under the banner of Christ, ought to look upon one another, as on the same side notwithstanding that difference. *He that is not against us, is on our part*. As to the great controversy between Christ and Beelzebub, he had said, *He that is not with me, is against me*, Matt. xii. 30. He that will not own Christ, owns Satan: But among those that own Christ, though not in the same circumstances, that follow him, though *not with us*, we must reckon, that though these differ from us, they are not against us, and therefore are *on our part*, and we must not be any hindrance to their usefulness.

41. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily

I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. 42. And whosoever shall offend one of *these* little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. 43. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched. 44. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 45. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched. 46. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 47. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire. 48. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 49. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. 50. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltiness, wherewith will you season it? Have salt in your selves, and have peace one with another.

Here, 1. Christ promiseth a reward to all those that are any way kind to his disciples, *ver. 41. Whosoever shall give you a cup of water when you need it, and it will be a refreshment to you, because ye belong to Christ*, and are of his family, *he shall not lose his reward*. Note, (1.) It is the honour and happiness of Christians that they *belong to Christ*, they have joined themselves to him, and are owned by him; they wear his livery as retainers to his family; nay, they are more nearly related, they are *members of his body*. (2.) They who belong to Christ, may sometimes be reduced to such straits as to be glad of a *cup of cold water*. (3.) The relieving of Christ's poor in their distresses is a good deed, and will turn to a good account; he accepts it, and will reward it. (4.) What kindness is done to Christ's poor, must be done them *for his sake*, and *because they belong to him*; for that is it that sanctifies the kindness, and puts a value upon it in the sight of God. (5.) This is a reason why we must not discountenance and discourage those who are serving the interests of Christ's kingdom, though they are not in every thing of our mind and way. It comes in here as a reason, why those must not be hindered that cast out devils in Christ's name, though they did not follow him; (as Dr. Hammond paraphraseth it) "It is not only the great eminent performances, which are done by you, my constant attendants and disciples, that are accepted by me, but every the least degree of sincere faith and Christian performance, proportionable but to the expressing the least kindness, as giving a cup of water to a disciple of mine for being such, shall be accepted and rewarded." If Christ reckons *kindnesses* to us services to him, we ought to reckon *services* to him kindnesses to us, and to encourage them, though done by those that follow not with us.

2. He threatens those that *offend his little ones*, that wilfully are the occasion of sin or trouble to them, *ver. 42. whosoever shall grieve any true Christians, though they be of the weakest, shall oppose their entrance into the ways of God, or discourage and obstruct their progress in those ways, shall either restrain them from doing good, or draw them in to commit sin, it were better for him, that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea*, his punishment will be very great, and the death and ruin of his soul, more terrible than such a death and ruin of his body would be. See *Matt. xviii. 6*.

3. He warns all his followers to take heed of ruining their own souls. This charity must begin at home; if we must take heed of doing any thing to hinder others from good, and to occasion their sin; much more careful must we be to avoid every thing, that will take us off from our duty, or lead us to sin; and that which doth so, we must part with it, though it be never so dear to us. This we had twice in Matthew, *chap. v. 29, 30. and chap. xviii. 8, 9*. It is here urged somewhat more largely and pressingly; certainly this requires our serious regard, which is so much insisted upon. Observe,

1. The case supposed, that our own *hand, or eye, or foot, offends us*, that the impure *corruption* we indulge, is as dear to us as an eye or a hand; or, that that which is to us as an eye or a hand, is become an invincible *temptation* to sin, or *occasion* of it. Suppose the beloved is become a sin, or the sin a beloved. Suppose we cannot keep that which is dear to us, but it will be a snare and a stumbling-block; suppose we must part with it, or part with Christ, and a good conscience.

2. The duty prescribed in that case; *pluck out the eye, cut off the hand and foot*, mortify the darling lust, kill it, crucify it, starve it, make no provision for it. Let the idols that have been *delectable* things, be cast away as *detestable* things; keep at a distance from that which is a temptation, though never so pleasing. It is necessary the part that is gangrened, should be taken off for the preservation of the whole. *Immedicabile vulnus ense recidendum* off.



*est, ne pars sincera trahatur.* We must put ourselves to pain, that we may not bring ourselves to ruin; self must be denied, that it may not be destroyed.

3. The necessity of doing this. The flesh must be mortified, that we may enter into life, ver. 43, 45. into the kingdom of God, ver. 47. Though by abandoning sin, we may for the present feel ourselves, as if we were *halt and maimed*, it may seem to be a force put upon ourselves, and may create us some uneasiness, yet it is for life, and all that men have they will give for their lives: It is for a kingdom, the kingdom of God, which we cannot otherwise obtain; these *halts and maims* will be the marks of the Lord Jesus, will be, in that kingdom, *scars of honour*.

4. The danger of not doing this. The matter is brought to this issue, that either sin must die; or we must die; if we will lay this *Delilah* in our bosom, it will betray us; if we be ruled by sin, we shall inevitably be ruined by it. If we must keep our *two hands*, and *two eyes*, and *two feet*, we must with them be cast into hell. Our Saviour often pressed our duty upon us, from the consideration of the torments of hell, which we run ourselves into, if we continue in sin. With what an emphasis of terror are those words repeated three times here, *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched?* which is quoted from Isa. lxvi.

24. (1.) The reflexions and reproaches of the sinner's own conscience are the *worm that dieth not*; which will cleave to the damned soul, as the worms do to the dead body, and prey upon it, and never leave it till it is quite devoured. *Son, remember*, will set this worm, a gnawing, and how terribly will it bite with that word, *Prov. v. 12, 13. How have I hated instruction!* The soul that is food to this worm dies not, and the worm is bred in it, and one with it, and therefore neither doth that die. Damned sinners will be to eternity accusing, condemning, and upbraiding themselves with their own follies, which, how much sorer they are now in love with them, will, at the last, bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder. (2.) The wrath of God fastening upon a guilty and polluted conscience, is the fire that is *not quenched*; for it is the wrath of the living God, the eternal God, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall. There are no operations of the Spirit of grace upon the souls of damned sinners, and therefore there is nothing to alter the nature of the fuel, which must remain for ever combustible; nor is there any application of the merit of Christ to them, and therefore there is nothing to appease or quench the violence of the fire. Dr. Whitby shews, that the eternity of the torments of hell, was not only the constant faith of the Christian church, but had been so of the Jewish church. Josephus saith, that the Pharisees held, that the souls of the wicked were to be *punished with perpetual punishment*; and that there was appointed for them *a perpetual prison*. And Philo saith, the punishment of the wicked is *to live for ever dying*, and to be *for ever, in pains and griefs that never cease*.

The two last verses are somewhat difficult, and interpreters agree not in the sense of them; for every one in general, or rather every one of them that are cast into hell, shall be *salted with fire*, and every sacrifice shall be *salted with salt*. Therefore have salt in yourselves. (1.) It was appointed by the law of Moses, that every sacrifice should be *salted with salt*, not to preserve it, for it was to be immediately consumed, but because it was the food of God's table, and no flesh is eaten without salt; it was therefore particularly required in the meat-offerings, *Lev. ii. 12.* (2.) The nature of man being corrupt, and as such being called *flesh*, (Gen. vi. 3. Psal. lxxviii. 39.) some way or other must be *salted*, in order to its being a sacrifice to God. The *salting* of fish (and I think of other things) they call the *curing* of it. (3.) Our chief concern is, to present ourselves *living sacrifices* to the grace of God, *Rom. xii. 1.* and in order to our acceptableness, we must be *salted with salt*, i. e. our corrupt affections must be subdued and mortified, and we must have in our souls a savour of grace. Thus the *offering up*, or *sacrificing*, of the Gentiles, is said to be *acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost*, as the sacrifices were *salted*, *Rom. xv. 16.* (4.) Those that have the salt of grace, must make it appear that they have it; that they *have salt in themselves*, a living principle of grace in their hearts, which works out all corrupt dispositions, and every thing in the soul, that tends to *putrefaction*, and would offend our God, or our own consciences, as unfavoury meat doth. Our *speech* must be *always with grace seasoned with this salt*, that no corrupt communication may proceed out of our mouth, but we may loath it as much, as we would to put stinking meat into our mouths. (5.) As this gracious salt will keep our own consciences void of offence, so it will keep our conversation with others so, that we may not offend any of Christ's little ones, but may be *at peace one with another*. (6.) We must not only have this salt of grace, but we must always retain the relish and savour of it, for if this salt lose its saltiness; if a Christian revolt from his Christianity, if he lose the savour of it, and be no longer under the power and influence of it, what can recover him? or *wherewith will ye season him?* This was said, *Matt. v. 13.* (7.) Those that present not themselves *living sacrifices* to God's grace, shall be made for ever *dying sacrifices* to his justice, and since they would not give honour to him, he will get him honour upon them; they

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would not be *salted with the salt* of divine grace, would not admit that to subdue their corrupt affections, no, they would not submit to the operation, could not bear the corrosives that were necessary to eat out the proud flesh, it was to them like cutting off a hand, or plucking out an eye; and therefore in hell they shall be *salted with fire*; coals of fire shall be scattered upon them, *Ezek. x. 2.* as salt upon the meat, and *brimstone*, *Job xviii. 15.* as fire and brimstone were rained on Sodom, the pleasures they have lived in, *shall eat their flesh, as it were fire*, *James v. 3.* The pain of mortifying the flesh now, is no more to be compared with the punishment for not mortifying it, than *salting with burning*. And since he had said, that the *fire of hell shall not be quenched*, but it might be objected, that the fuel will not last always, he here intimates, that by the power of God, it shall be made to last always; for those that are *cast into hell*, will find the fire to have not only the *corroding* quality of salt, but its *preserving* quality; from whence it is used, to signify that which is *lasting*; a covenant of salt, is a *perpetual* covenant. And Lot's wife being turned into a *pillar of salt*, made her a remaining monument of divine vengeance. Now since this will certainly be the doom of those that do not crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts; let us, knowing this *terror of the Lord*, be persuaded to do it.

## CHAP. X.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Christ's dispute with the Pharisees, concerning divorce, ver. 1—12. (2.) The kind entertainment he gave to the little children that were brought to him to be blessed, ver. 13—16. (3.) His trial of the rich man, that enquired what he must do to get to heaven, ver. 17—22. (4.) His discourse with his disciples upon that occasion, concerning the peril of riches, ver. 23—27. and the advantage of being impoverished for his sake, ver. 28—31. (5.) The repeated notice he gave his disciples of his sufferings and death approaching, ver. 32—34. (6.) The counsel he gave to James and John, to think of suffering with him, rather than of reigning with him, ver. 35—45. (7.) The cure of Bartimeus, a poor blind man, ver. 46—52. All which passages of story, we had the substance of before, *Matt. xix. and xx.*

1. **A**ND he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea, by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again. 2. ¶ And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. 3. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? 4. And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. 5. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart, he wrote you this precept. 6. But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. 7. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; 8. And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. 9. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. 10. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. 11. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. 12. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Our Lord Jesus was an itinerant preacher; did not continue long in a place, for the whole land of Canaan was his parish, or diocese, and therefore he would visit every part of it, and give instructions to those in the remotest corners of it. Here we have him in the *coasts* of Judea, by the further side of Jordan, eastward, as we found him not long since, in the utmost borders westward, near Tyre and Sidon. Thus was his circuit, like that of the sun, from whose light and heat nothing is hid. Now here we have him,

1. *Resorted to by the people*; ver. 1. wherever he was, they flocked after him in crowds; they came to him again, as they had done, when he had formerly been in these parts, and, *as he was wont, he taught them again*. Note, Preaching was Christ's constant practice; it was what he was used to, and wherever he came, he did *as he was wont*. In Matthew it is said, he *healed them*, here it is said, he *taught them*; his cures were to confirm his doctrine, and to recommend it, and his doctrine was to explain



plain his cures, and illustrate them. His *teaching* was *healing* to poor souls. He *taught them again*. Note, Even those whom Christ hath taught, have need to be taught *again*. Such is the fulness of the Christian doctrine, that there is still more to be learned, and such our forgetfulness, that we need to be minded of what we do know.

2. We have him *disputed with* by the Pharisees, who envied the progress of his spiritual arms, and did all they could to obstruct and oppose it; to divert him; to perplex him, and to prejudice the people against him.

Here is, 1. A question they started concerning divorce, *ver. 2. Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?* This was a good question, if it had been well put, and with a humble desire to know the mind of God in this matter; but they proposed it, *tempting him*, seeking an occasion against him, and an opportunity to expose him, which side soever he should take of the question. Ministers must stand upon their guard, lest, under pretence of being advised with, they be ensnared.

2. Christ's reply to them, with a question, *ver. 3. What did Moses command you?* This he asked them, to testify his respect to the law of Moses, and to shew that he came not to destroy it; and to engage them to an universal, impartial respect for Moses's writings, and to compare one part of them with another.

3. The fair account they gave of what they found in the law of Moses, expressly concerning divorce, *ver. 4. Christ asked, What Moses commanded, they own Moses only suffered, or permitted, a man, to write his wife a bill of divorce, and to put her away; Deut. xxiv. 1. If you will do it, you must do it in writing, delivered into her own hand, and so put her away, and never return to her again.*

4. The answer that Christ gave to their question, in which he abides by the doctrine he had formerly laid down in this case, *Matt. v. 32. That whosoever puts away his wife, except for fornication, causeth her to commit adultery.* And, to clear this, he here shews,

1. That the reason why Moses in his law permitted divorce, was such, as that they ought not to make use of that permission; for it was only *for the hardness of their hearts*, *ver. 5.* lest if they were not permitted to divorce their wives, they should murder them; so that none must put away their wives, but such as are willing to own, that their hearts were so hard, as to need this permission.

2. That the account which Moses, in this *history*, gives of the institution of marriage, affords such a reason against divorce, as amounts to a prohibition of it. So that if the question be, *What did Moses command?* *ver. 3.* it must be answered, though by a temporary proviso he allowed divorce to the Jews, yet by an eternal reason, he forbid it to all the children of Adam and Eve, and that is it we must abide by.

Moses tells us, (1.) That God made man *male and female, one male, and one female*; so that *Adam could not* put away his wife and take another, for there was no other to take, which was an intimation to all his sons, that they *must not*. (2.) When this male and this female were, by the ordinance of God, joined together in holy marriage, the law was, that a man must *leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife*, *ver. 7.* which intimates, not only the nearness of the relation, but the perpetuity of it; he shall so cleave to his wife, as not to be separated from her. (3.) The result of the relation is, that though they are *two*, yet they are *one*, they are *one flesh*, *ver. 8.* The union between them is the most intimate that can be, and, as Dr. Hammond expresseth it, a sacred thing that must not be violated. (4.) God himself has *joined them together*, he has not only, as Creator, fitted them to be comforts and helps meet for each other, but he has in wisdom and goodness appointed them, who are thus joined together, to live together in love, till death parts them. Marriage is not an invention of men, but a divine institution; and therefore is to be religiously observed, and the more, because it is a figure of the mystical, inseparable union between Christ and his church.

Now from all this he infers, that men ought not to *put* their wives *asunder* from them, whom God has put so near to them. The bond which God himself has tied, is not to be lightly untied. They who are for divorcing their wives for every offence, would do well to consider what would become of them, if God should in like manner deal with them. See *Isa. l. 1. Jer. iii. 1.*

5. Christ's discourse with his disciples in private, about this matter, *ver. 10, 11.* It was an advantage to them, that they had opportunity of personal converse with Christ, not only about gospel mysteries, but about moral duties, for their further satisfaction. No more is here related of this private conference, but the law Christ laid down in this case. That it is adultery for a man to put away his wife and marry another, it is adultery *against the wife* he puts away, it is a wrong to her, and a breach of his contract with her, *ver. 11.* He adds, *if a woman shall put away her husband, i. e. elope from him, leave him by consent, and be married to another, she commits adultery*, *ver. 12.* and it will be no excuse at all to her to say, that it was with the consent of her husband. Wisdom and grace, holiness and love, reigning in the heart, will make those commands easy, which, to the carnal mind, may be as a heavy yoke.

13. ¶ And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. 14. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. 15. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. 16. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

It is looked upon as the indication of a kind and tender disposition, to take notice of little children, and this was remarkable in our Lord Jesus; which is an encouragement not only to little children, to apply themselves to Christ when they are very young, but to grown people, who are conscious to themselves of weakness and childishness, and of being, through manifold infirmities, helpless, and useless, like little children. Here we have,

1. Little children brought to Christ, *ver. 13.* Their parents, or whoever they were that had the nursing of them, brought them to him that he should *touch them*, in token of his commanding and conferring a blessing on them. It doth not appear, they needed any bodily cure, nor were they capable of being taught. But it seems, (1.) They that had the care of them, were mostly concerned about their souls, their better part, which ought to be the principal care of all parents for their children; for that is the principal part, and it is well with them, if it be well with their souls. (2.) They believed that Christ's blessing would do their souls good, and therefore to him they bring them, that he might *touch them*, knowing that he could reach their hearts, when nothing their parents could say to them, or do for them, would reach them. We may present our children to Christ now he is in heaven, for from thence he can reach them with his blessing, and therein we may act faith upon the fulness and extent of his grace, the kind intimations he hath always given of favour to the seed of the faithful, the tenor of the covenant with Abraham, and the promise to us, and to our children, especially that great promise of pouring his Spirit upon our seed, and his blessing upon our offspring, *Isa. xlv. 3.*

2. The discouragement which the disciples gave to the bringing of children to Christ. They rebuked them that brought them; as if they had been sure, they knew their Master's mind in this matter, whereas he had lately cautioned them not to *despise the little ones*.

3. The encouragement Christ gave to it. (1.) He took it very ill at his disciples for keeping them off: *When he saw it, he was much displeased*, *ver. 14.* What do you mean? Will you hinder me from doing good, from doing good to the rising generation, to the lambs of the flock? Christ is very angry with his own disciples, if they discountenance any in coming to him themselves, or in bringing their children to him. (2.) He ordered that they should be brought to him, and nothing said or done to hinder them. Suffer little children, as soon as they are capable, to come to me, to offer up their supplications to me, and to receive instructions from me. Little children are welcome betimes to the throne of grace with their Hosanna's. (3.) He owned them as members of his church, as they had been of the Jewish church. He came to set up the kingdom of God among men, and took this occasion to declare, that that kingdom admitted little children to be the subjects of it, and gave them a title to the privileges of subjects. Nay, the kingdom of God is to be kept up by such: They must be taken in, when they are little children, that they may be secured for hereafter, to bear up the name of Christ. (4.) That there must be something of the temper and disposition of little children, found in all that Christ will own and bless. We must receive the kingdom of God as little children, *ver. 15.* That is, we must stand affected to Christ and his grace, as little children do to their parents, nurses, and teachers. We must be *inquisitive*, as children, must learn as children, that is the learning age, and in learning must believe, *Oportet discitem credere*. The mind of a child is white paper (*tabula rasa*) you may write upon it what you will, so must our minds be to the pen of the blessed Spirit. Children are under government, so must we be, *Lord, What wilt thou have me to do?* We must receive the kingdom of God as the child Samuel did, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears*. Little children depend upon their parents wisdom and care, are carried in their arms, go where they send them, and take what they provide for them; and thus must we receive the kingdom of God, with a humble resignation of ourselves to Jesus Christ, and an easy dependence upon him, both for strength and righteousness, for tuition, provision, and a portion. (5.) He received the children, and gave them what was desired, *ver. 16.* He took them up in his arms, in token of his affectionate concern for them, put his hands upon them, as was desired, and blessed them. See how he out-did the desires of these parents; they begged he would touch them, but he did more. 1. He took them in his arms. Now the scripture was fulfilled, *Isa. xl. 11. He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom*. Time was, when Christ himself was taken up in old Simeon's arms, *Luke ii. 28.* And now he took up these children, not complaining of the burthen;



as Moses did, when he was bid to carry Israel (that peevish child) in his bosom, as a nursing father bears the sucking child, Numb. xi. 12. but pleased with it. If we in a right manner bring our children to Christ, he will take them up not only in the arms of his power and providence, but in the arms of his pity and grace, as Ezek. xvi. 8. underneath them are the everlasting arms. 2. He put his hands upon them, noting the bestowing of his Spirit upon them, (for that is the hand of the Lord) and his setting them apart for himself. 3. He blessed them with the spiritual blessings he came to give. Our children are happy, if they have but the Mediator's blessing for their portion. It is true, we do not read that he baptized these children, baptism was not fully settled, as the door of admission into the church, till after Christ's resurrection, but he asserted their visible church-membership, and by another sign bestowed those blessings upon them, which are now appointed to be conveyed and conferred by baptism, the seal of the promise, which is to us and to our children.

17. ¶ And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 18. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good, but one, that is God. 19. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. 20. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. 21. Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me. 22. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. 23. ¶ And Jesus looked round about, and said unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 24. And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! 25. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? 27. And Jesus looking upon them, said, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. 28. ¶ Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. 29. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospels, 30. But he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. 31. But many that are first, shall be last: and the last, first.

Here is, 1. A hopeful meeting between Christ and a young man, so he is said to be, *Matt. xix. 20—22.* and a ruler, *Luke xviii. 18.* a person of quality. Some circumstances here are, which we had not in Matthew, which make his address to Christ very promising.

(1.) He came running to Christ, which was an indication of his humility; he laid aside the gravity and grandeur of a ruler, when he came to Christ: and of his earnestness and importunity: he ran as one in haste, and longing to be in conversation with Christ. He had now an opportunity of consulting this great prophet, in the things that belonged to his peace, and he would not let slip the opportunity.

(2.) He came to him when he was in the way, in the midst of company: he did not insist upon a private conference with him by night, as Nicodemus did, though like him he was a ruler, but when he shall find him without, will embrace that opportunity of advising with him, and not be ashamed, *Cant. viii. 1.*

(3.) He kneeled to him, in token of the great value and veneration he had for him, as a teacher come from God, and his earnest desire to be taught by him. He bowed the knee to the Lord Jesus, as one that would not only do obedience to him now, but would yield obedience to him always; he bowed the knee, as one that meant to bow the soul to him.

(4.) His address to him was serious and weighty. *Good Master, What shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* Eternal life was an article of his creed, though then denied by the Sadducees, a

prevailing party; he thinks it a thing possible, that he may inherit eternal life, looking upon it not only as set before us, but offered to us; he asks, What he shall do now that he may be happy for ever? Most men enquire for good to be had in this world, *Psal. iv. 6.* Any good, he asks for good to be done in this world, in order to the enjoyment of the greatest good in the other world; not who will make us to see good, but to do good: he enquires for happiness in the way of duty; the *summum bonum*, which Solomon was in quest of, was that good for the sons of men which they should do, *Eccl. ii. 3.* Now this was, (1.) A very serious question in itself, it was about eternal things, and his own concern in those things. Note, Then there begins to be some hope of people, when they begin to enquire solicitously, what they shall do to get to heaven. (2.) It was proposed to a right person, one that was every way fit to answer it, being himself the way, the truth, and the life, the true way to life, to eternal life; who came from heaven on purpose, first to lay open for us, and then to lay open to us; first to make, and then to make known the way to heaven. Note, Those who would know what they shall do to be saved, must apply themselves to Christ, and enquire of him; it is peculiar to the Christian religion both to shew eternal life, and to shew the way to it. (3.) It was proposed with a good design, to be instructed. We find this same question put by a lawyer, not kneeling, but standing up, *Luke x. 25.* with a bad design, to pick quarrels with him, he tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do? it is not so much the good words, as the good intention of them that Christ looks at.

(5.) Christ encouraged this address, (1.) By assisting his faith, ver. 17. He called him, good Master, and Christ would have him mean thereby, that he looked upon him to be God, since there is none good but one, that is God, who is one, and his name one; *Zech. xiv. 9.* Our English word God, doubtless hath affinity with good; as the Hebrews name God by his power, Elohim, the strong God; so we by his goodness, the good God. (2.) By directing his practice, ver. 19. Keep the commandments, and thou knowest what they are; he mentions the six commandments of the second table, which prescribe our duty to our neighbour; he inverts the order, putting the seventh commandment before the sixth, to intimate that adultery, is a sin no less heinous, than murder itself. The fifth commandment is here put last, as that which should especially be remembered and observed, to keep us to all the rest. Instead of the tenth commandment, Thou shalt not covet, our Saviour here puts, defraud not. *Μη ἀποσφύσης*, That is, saith Dr. Hammond, Thou shalt rest contented with thy own, and not seek to increase it by the diminution of other mens. It is a rule of justice, not to advance or enrich ourselves, by doing wrong or injury to any other.

(6.) The young man bid fair for heaven, having been free from any open gross violations of the divine commands. Thus far he was able to say in some measure, ver. 20. Master, all these have I observed from my youth; he thought he had, and his neighbours thought so too. Note, Ignorance of the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law, makes people think themselves in a better condition than really they are. Paul was alive without the law. But when he saw that to be spiritual, he saw himself to be carnal, *Rom. vii. 9, 14.* However he that could say, he was free from scandalous sin, went further than many in the way to eternal life. But though we know nothing by ourselves, yet are we not thereby justified.

(7.) Christ had a kindness for him. Jesus beholding him, loved him, ver. 21. He was pleased to find that he had lived inoffensively, and pleased to see, that he was inquisitive how to live better than so. Christ particularly loves to see young people, and rich people, asking the way to heaven, with their faces thitherward.

2. Here is a sorrowful parting between Christ and this young man.

1. Christ gave him a command of trial, by which it would appear whether he did in sincerity aim at eternal life, and press towards it: he seemed to have his heart much upon it, and if so, he is what he should be, but has he indeed his heart upon it? Bring him to the touchstone. (1.) Can he find in his heart to part with his riches for the service of Christ? he hath a good estate, and now shortly at the first founding of the Christian church, the necessity of the case will require, that those that have lands sell them, and lay the money at the apostles feet, and how will he dispense with that? *Acts iv. 34.* After a while tribulation and persecution will arise, because of the word; and he must be forced to sell his estate, or have it taken from him, and how will he like that? Let him know the worst, now if he will not come up to these terms, let him quit his pretensions; as good at first as at last. Sell whatsoever thou hast over and above what is necessary for thy support; probably he had no family to provide for; let him therefore be a father to the poor, and make them his heirs. Every man according to his ability must relieve the poor, and be content, when there is occasion, to straiten himself to do it. Worldly wealth is given us not only as maintenance to bear our charges through this world according to our place in it, but as a talent, to be used and employed for the glory of our great Master, in the world, who hath so ordered it, that



that the poor we should have always with us, as his receivers. (2.) Can he find in his heart to go through the hardest costliest services he may be called to as a disciple of Christ, and depend upon him for a recompence in heaven? He asks Christ what he shall do more than he has done to obtain eternal life, and Christ puts it to him, whether he has indeed that firm belief of, and that high value for eternal life, that he seems to have. Doth he really believe there is a treasure in heaven sufficient to make up all he can leave or lose, or lay out for Christ? Is he willing to deal with Christ upon trust? Can he give him credit for all he is worth; and be willing to bear a present cross in expectation of a future crown?

2. Upon this he flew off, ver. 22. *He was sad at that saying*, was sorry he could not be a follower of Christ, upon any easier terms than leaving all to follow him; that he could not lay hold on eternal life, and keep hold of his temporal possessions too. But since he could not come up to the terms of discipleship, he was so fair as not to pretend to it, *He went away grieved*. Here appeared the truth of that, *Matt. vi. 24. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*, while he held to mammon he did in effect despise Christ, as all those do who prefer the world before him. He that bids for what he has a mind of in the market, yet goes away grieved, and leaves it, because he cannot have it at his own price. Two words to a bargain. Motions are not marriages. That which ruined this young man was, *he had great possessions*: thus the prosperity of fools destroys them, and those who spend their days in wealth, are tempted to say to God, depart from us, or to their hearts, depart from God.

3. Here is Christ's discourse with his disciples. We are tempted to wish that Christ had mollified that saying which frightened this young gentleman from following him, and by any explanation taken off the harshness of it: but he knew all mens hearts, he would not court him to be his follower, because he was a rich man, and a ruler; but if he will go, let him go; Christ will keep no man against his will; and therefore we do not find that Christ called him back, but took this occasion to instruct his disciples, in two things.

First, The difficulty of the salvation of those that have an abundance of this world; because there are few who have a deal to leave that can be persuaded to leave it for Christ, or to lay it out in doing good.

1. Christ asserts this here. *He looked about upon his disciples*, because he would have them all take notice of what he said, that by it they might have their judgments rightly informed, and their mistakes rectified concerning worldly wealth, which they were apt to over-rule. *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God*, ver. 23. They have many temptations to grapple with, and many difficulties to get over, which lie not in the way of poor people. But he explains himself, ver. 24. where he calls the disciples children, because as such they should be taught by him, and portioned by him with better things than this young man left Christ to cleave to; and whereas he had said how hardly those that have riches will get to heaven; here he tells them, that the danger arose not so much from their having riches as from their trusting to them, and placing their confidence in them, expecting protection, provision, and a portion from them; saying that to their gold which they should say only to their God, *Thou art my hope*, Job xxxi. 24. They that have such a value as this for the wealth of the world, will never be brought to put a right value upon Christ and his grace. They that have never so much riches, but do not trust in them, that see the vanity of them, and their utter insufficiency to make a soul happy, have got over the difficulty, and can easily part with them for Christ: but they that have never so little, if they set their hearts upon that little, and place their happiness in it, it will keep them from Christ. He enforceth this assertion with, ver. 25. *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man that trusts in riches, or inclines to do so, to enter into the kingdom of God*. The disproportion here seems so great (though the more so, the more it answers the intention) that some have laboured to bring the camel and the eye of the needle a little nearer together. (1.) Some imagine there might be some wicket-gate or door at Jerusalem, commonly known by the name of the needle's eye for its straitness, through which a camel could not be got, unless he were unloaded, and made to kneel, as those camels, Gen. xxiv. 11. so a rich man cannot get to heaven unless he be willing to part with the burthen of his worldly wealth, and stoop to the duties of a humble religion, and so enter in at the strait gate. (2.) Others suggest that the word we translate a camel sometimes signifies a cable-rope, which though not to be got through a needle's eye, yet is of greater affinity to it. A rich man compared with the poor, is as a cable to a single thread, stronger but not so pliable, and it will not go through the needle's eye unless it be untwisted; so the rich man must be loosed and disentangled from his riches, and then there is some hopes of him, that thread by thread he may be got through the eye of the needle, otherwise he is good for nothing but to cast anchor in the earth.

2. This truth was very surprizing to the disciples, they were astonished at his words, ver. 24. *They were astonished out of measure, and said among themselves, Who then can be saved?* They

knew what were generally the sentiments of the Jewish teachers that the Spirit of God chuseth to reside upon rich men; and they knew what abundance of promises there were in the Old Testament of temporal good things: they knew likewise that either are rich, or fain would be so, and that they who are rich have so much the larger opportunities of doing good, and therefore were amazed to hear that it should be so hard for rich people to go to heaven.

3. Christ reconciled them to it, by referring it to the almighty power of God, to help even rich people over the difficulties that lie in the way of their salvation. Ver. 23. *He looked upon them* to engage their attention, and said, *with men it is impossible*; rich people cannot by their own skill or resolution get over these difficulties, but the grace of God can do it, for *with him all things are possible*. If the righteous scarcely are saved, much more may we say so of the rich; and therefore when any get to heaven they must give all the glory to God, who worketh in them both to will and to do.

Secondly, The greatness of the salvation of those that have but a little of this world, and leave it for Christ. This he speaks of upon occasion of Peter's mentioning what he and the rest of the disciples had left to follow him. Behold, (saith he) *we have left all to follow thee*, ver. 28. You have done well, saith Christ and it will prove in the end that you have done well for yourselves; you shall be abundantly recompensed, and not only you shall be re-imbursed who have left but a little, but those that have never so much, though it were so much as this young man had that could not persuade himself to quit it for Christ; yet they shall have much more than an equivalent for it. (1.) The loss is supposed to be very great; he instanceth, (1.) In worldly wealth, houses are here put first, and lands last: if a man quit his house, which should be for his habitation, and his land which should be for his maintenance, and so makes himself a beggar and an out-cast; this has been the choice of suffering saints, farewell houses and lands, though never so convenient and desirable, though the inheritance of fathers, for the house which is from heaven, and the inheritance of the saints in light, where are many mansions. (2.) In dear relations, father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters; in these, as much as in any temporal blessing, the comfort of life is bound up, without these the world would be a wilderness, yet when we must either forsake these, or Christ; we must remember, that we stand in nearer relation to Christ, than we do to any creature; and therefore to keep in with him, we must be content to break with all the world, and say to father and mother, as Levi did, *I have not known you*. The greatest trial of a good man's constancy is, when his love to Christ comes to stand in competition with a love that is lawful, nay, that is his duty. It is easy to such a one to forsake a lust for Christ, for he hath that within him that riseth against it: but to forsake a father, a brother, a wife, for Christ whom he knows he must love, is hard. And yet he must do so, rather than deny or disown Christ. Thus great is the loss supposed to be, but it is for Christ's sake, that he may be honoured, and the gospel's, that that may be promoted and propagated. It is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes the martyr. And therefore, (2.) The advantage will be great. (1.) They shall receive a hundred-fold in this time, house and brethren, and sisters; not in specie, but that which is equivalent. He shall have abundance of comfort, while he lives, sufficient to make up all his losses; his relation to Christ, his communion with the saints, and his title to eternal life, shall be to him brethren, and sisters, and houses, and all. God's providence gave Job double to what he had had, but suffering Christians shall have a hundred-fold in the comforts of the Spirit sweetening their creature-comforts. But observe, it is added here in Mark, *with persecutions*. Even when they are gainers by Christ, let them still expect to be sufferers for him; and not to be out of the reach of persecution, till they come to heaven. Nay, The persecutions seem to come in here among the receivings in this present time, for unto you it is given, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his name, yet this is not all. (2.) They shall have eternal life in the world to come. If they receive an hundred-fold in this world, one would think they should not be encouraged to expect any more. Yet as if that were a small matter, they shall have life eternal into the bargain; which is more than ten thousand-fold, ten thousand times told, for all their losses. But because they talked so much, and really more than became them of leaving all for Christ; he tells them, though they were first called, yet there should be disciples called after them, that should be preferred before them, as St. Paul, who was one born out of due time, and yet laboured more abundantly than all the rest of the apostles, 1 Cor. xv. 10. Then the first were last, and the last first.

32. ¶ And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem: and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed, and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, 33. Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of



of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes: and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles; 34. And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again. 35. ¶ And James and John the sons Zebedee come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. 36. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? 37. They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. 38. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? 39. And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal, shall ye be baptized: 40. But to sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. 41. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. 42. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. 43. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: 44. And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. 45. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Here is, First, Christ's prediction of his own sufferings; this string he harped much upon, though in the ears of his disciples it sounded very harsh and unpleasing.

1. See here how bold he was, when they were going up to Jerusalem, *Jesus went before them*, as the *Captain of our salvation*, that was now to be *made perfect through sufferings*, ver. 32. Thus he shewed himself forward to go on with his undertaking, even when he came to the hardest part of it; now the time was at hand he said, *Lo, I come*, so far from *drawing back*, that now more than ever he *pressed forwards*. *Jesus went before them*, and they were *amazed*. They began now to consider what imminent danger they ran themselves into, when they went to Jerusalem, how very malicious the Sanhedrin which sat there was against their Master and them, and they were ready to tremble at the thought of it. To hearten them therefore, Christ *went before them*: Come, saith he, sure you will venture where your Master ventures. Note, When we see our selves entering upon sufferings, it is encouraging to see our Master go before us. Or, he *went before them*, and therefore they were *amazed*, they admired to see with what cheerfulness and alacrity he went on, though he knew he was going to suffer and die. Note, Christ's courage and constancy in going on with his undertaking for our salvation, is, and will be the wonder of all his disciples.

2. See here how timorous and faint-hearted his disciples were. *As they followed they were afraid*, afraid for themselves, as being apprehensive of their own danger; and justly might they be *ashamed* of their being thus *afraid*. Their Master's courage should have put spirit into them.

3. See here what method he took to silence their fears: He did not go about to make the matter better than it was, nor to feed them with hopes that he might escape the storm, but told them again what he had often told them before, the *things that should happen to him*. He knew the worst of it, and therefore went on thus boldly, and he will let them know the worst of it. Come, *be not afraid*; for, (1.) There is no remedy, the matter is determined, and cannot be avoided. (2.) It is only the *Son of man* that shall suffer, their time of suffering was not at hand; he will now provide for their security. (3.) He *shall rise again*; the issue of his sufferings will be glorious to himself, and advantageous to all that are his, ver. 33, 34. The method and particulars of Christ's sufferings are more largely foretold here, than in any other of the predictions; that he shall first be delivered up by Judas, to the *chief priests and the scribes*; that they shall condemn him to death, but not having power to put him to death, they shall *deliver him to the Gentiles*, to the Roman powers, and they shall *mock him*, and *scourge him*, and *spit upon him*, and *kill him*. Christ had a perfect foresight, not only of his own death, but of all the aggravating circumstances of it, and yet he thus went forth to meet it.

Secondly, The check he gave to two of his disciples for their ambitious request. This story is much the same here, as we had No. lxxxvii.

it, *Matt. xx. 20.* only there they are said to have made their request by their mother, here they are said to make it themselves; she introduced them, and presented their petition, and then they seconded it, and assented to it. Note, 1. As on the one hand, there are some that do not *use*, so on the other hand, there are some that do *abuse* the great encouragements Christ has given us in prayer. He hath said, *ask, and it shall be given you*; and it is a commendable faith to ask for the great things he has promised: but it was a culpable presumption in these disciples to make such a boundless demand upon their Master. *We would that thou shouldest do for us, whatsoever we shall desire*; we had much better leave it to him to do for us what he sees fit, and he will do more than we can desire, *Eph. iii. 20.*

2. We must be cautious how we make general promises; Christ would not engage to do for them whatever they desired, but would know from them what it was they did desire. *What would ye, that I should do for you?* He would have them go on with their suit, that they might be made ashamed of it.

3. Many have been led into a snare by false notions of Christ's kingdom, as if it were of *this world*, and like the kingdoms of the potentates of this world. James and John conclude, if Christ *rise again* he must be a king, and if he be a king his apostles must be peers, and one of these would willingly be the *Primus par regni*, and the other next him, like Joseph in Pharaoh's court, or Daniel in Darius's.

4. Worldly honour is a glittering thing, with which the eyes of Christ's own disciples have many a time been dazzled. Whereas to *be good* should be more our care than to *look great*, or to have the preheminance.

5. Our weakness and short-sightedness appears as much in our prayers, as in any thing. We cannot order our speech, when we speak to God, by reason of darkness, both concerning him and concerning our selves. It is folly to prescribe to God, and wisdom to subscribe.

6. It is the will of Christ that we should prepare for sufferings, and leave it to him to recompense us for them. He needs not be put in mind, as Ahasuerus did, of the services of his people, nor can he forget their *work of faith, and labour of love*. Our care must be, that we may have wisdom and grace to know how to suffer with him, and then we may trust him to provide in the best manner how we shall reign with him, and when and where, and what the degrees of our glory shall be.

Thirdly, The check he gave to the rest of the disciples, for their uneasiness at it. *They began to be much displeased*, to have indignation about James and John, ver. 41. They were angry at them for affecting precedency, not because it did so ill become the disciples of Christ, but because each of them hoped to have it themselves. When the Cynick trampled on Alexander's foot-cloth, with *Calco fastum Alexandri*, now I tread on Alexander's pride, he was seasonably checked with *sed majori fastu*, but with greater pride of thine own; so these discovered their own ambition, in their displeasure at the ambition of James and John; and Christ took this occasion to warn them against it, and all their successors in the ministry of the gospel, ver. 42, 43. He called them to him in a familiar way, to give them an example of condescension, then when he was reproving their ambition, and to teach them never to bid their disciples keep their distance. He shews them,

1. That dominion was generally *abused in the world*, ver. 42. *They which seem to rule over the Gentiles*, that have the name and title of rulers, *they exercise lordship over them*, that is all they study, and aim at, not so much to protect them, and provide for their welfare, as to *exercise authority upon them*; they *will be obeyed*, aim to be arbitrary, and to have their will in every thing. *Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas*. Their care is what they shall get by their subjects, to support their own pomp and grandeur, not what they shall do for them.

2. That therefore it ought not to be *admitted into the church*; it shall not be so among you; those that shall be put under your charge, must be as sheep under the charge of the *shepherd*; who is to tend them and feed them, and be a servant to them, not as horses under the command of the driver, that works them and beats them, and gets his pennyworths out of them. He that affects to be great and chief, that thrusts himself into a secular dignity and dominion, *he shall be servant of all*, he shall be mean and contemptible in the eyes of all that are wise and good; *He that exalteth himself shall be abased*. Or rather, He that would be truly great, and chief, he must lay out himself to do good to all, must stoop to the meanest services, and labour in the hardest services. Those not only shall be most *honoured* hereafter, but are most *honourable* now who, are most useful. To convince them of this, he sets before them his own example, ver. 45. The *Son of man* submits first to the greatest hardships and hazards, and then enters into his glory, and can you expect to come to it any other way; or to have more ease and honour than he has? (1.) He takes upon him *the form of a servant*, comes not to be *ministered to*, and waited upon, but to *minister*, and wait to be gracious. (2.) He becomes *obedient to death*, and to its dominion, for he *gives his life a ransom for many*; did he die for the benefit of good people, and shall not we study to live for their benefit?



46. ¶ And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples, and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the high-way-side, begging. 47. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. 48. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. 49. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called: and they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. 50. And he casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 51. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. 52. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

This passage of story agrees with that, *Matt. xx. 29, &c.* only that there we were told of *two* blind men, here, and *Luke xviii. 35.* only of *one*; but if there were *two*, there was *one*; this one is named here, being a *blind beggar that was much talked of*; Bartimeus, that is, the *son of Timeus*; which some think signifies, *the son of a blind man*; he was the blind son of a blind father, which made the case the worse, and the cure the more wonderful, and the more proper to typify the spiritual cures wrought by the grace of Christ, on those that not only are born blind, but are born of those that are blind.

1. This blind man sat *begging*; as they do with us. Note, Those who by the providence of God are disabled to get a livelihood by their own labour, and have not any other way of subsisting, are the most proper objects of charity; and particular care ought to be taken of them.

2. He cried out to the Lord Jesus for *mercy*. *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David*; misery is the object of mercy, his own miserable case he recommends to the compassion of the *Son of David*, of whom it was foretold, that when he should come to save us, *the eyes of the blind should be opened*, Isa. xxxv. 5. In coming to Christ for help and healing, we should have an eye to him as the promised Messiah, the trustee of mercy and grace.

3. Christ encouraged him to hope that he should find mercy, for he *stood still and commanded him to be called*. We must never reckon it a hindrance to us in our way to *stand still*, when it is to do a good work. Those about him, who had discouraged him at first, perhaps were now the persons that handed to him the gracious call of Christ. *Be of good comfort, rise, he calls thee*, and if he call thee he will cure thee. Note, The gracious invitations Christ gives us to come to him, are great encouragements to our hope, that we shall speed well, if we come to him, and shall have what we come for. Let the guilty, the empty, the tempted, the hungry, the naked, be of good comfort, for he *calls them* to be pardoned, to be supplied, to be succoured, to be filled, to be clothed, to have all that done for them, which their case calls for.

4. The poor man hereupon made the best of his way to Christ. He *cast away his loose upper garment*, and came to Jesus, *ver. 50.* he cast away every thing that might be in danger of throwing him down, or might any way hinder him in coming to Christ, or retard his motion. Those who would come to Jesus, must cast away the garment of their own sufficiency, must strip themselves of all conceit of that, and must free themselves from *every weight*, and the sin that, like long garments, doth *most easily beset them*, Heb. xii. 1.

5. The particular favour he begged was, that his *eyes might be opened*; that so he might be able to work for his living, and might be no longer burthensome to others. It is a very desirable thing to be in a capacity of earning our own bread; and where God has given men their limbs and senses, it is a shame for men by their foolishness and slothfulness, to make themselves in effect *blind and lame*.

6. This favour he received, his eyes were opened, *ver. 52.* and two things Mark here adds; which intimates, (1.) How Christ made it a double favour to him, by putting the honour of it upon his faith. *Thy faith has made thee whole*; faith in Christ as the son of David, and in his pity and power. Not thy importunity, but *thy faith*, setting Christ on work, or rather Christ setting thy faith on work. Those supplies are most comfortable, that are fetched in by our faith. (2.) How he made it a double favour to himself; when he had *received his sight*, he *followed Jesus by the way*; by this he made it appear, that he was thoroughly cured, that he no more needed one to lead him, but could go himself; and by this he evidenced the grateful sense he had of Christ's kindness to him, that when he had his sight, he made this use of it. It is not enough to *come to Christ* for

spiritual healing, but when we are healed, we must continue to follow him; that we may do honour to him, and receive instruction from him. Those that have spiritual eye-sight see that beauty in Christ, as will effectually draw them to *run after him*.

## C H A P. XI.

*We are now come to the Passion-Week, the week in which Christ died; and the great occurrences of that week. (1.) Christ's riding in triumph into Jerusalem, ver. 1—11. (2.) His cursing the barren fig-tree, ver. 12—14. (3.) His driving those out of the temple that turned it into an exchange, ver. 15—19. (4.) His discourse with his disciples concerning the power of faith, and efficacy of prayer, on occasion of the withering of the fig-tree he cursed, ver. 20—26. (5.) His reply to those who questioned his authority, ver. 27—33.*

1. **A**ND when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage, and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, 2. And faith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you; and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. 3. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. 4. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without, in a place where two ways met: and they loose him. 5. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye loosing the colt? 6. And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. 7. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. 8. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. 9. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. 10. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. 11. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple; and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the even-tide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

We have here the story of the publick entry Christ made into Jerusalem, four or five days before his death. And he came into town thus remarkably, (1.) To shew that he was not afraid of the power and malice of his enemies in Jerusalem: He did not steal into the city *incognito*, as one that durst not shew his face; no, they needed not send spies to search for him, he comes in with observation. This would be an encouragement to his disciples that were timorous, and cowed at the thought of their enemy's power and rage; let them see how bravely their Master sets them all at defiance. (2.) To shew that he was not cast down, or disquieted at the thoughts of his approaching sufferings, he not only came publickly, but came in cheerfully, and with acclamations of joy. Though he was now but taking the field, and *girding on the harness*, yet being fully assured of a complete victory, he thus triumphs as though he had put it off.

First, The *out-side* of this triumph was very *mean*; he rode upon an *ass's colt*, that being an *ass* looked contemptible, and made no figure; and being but a *colt whereon never man sat*, we may suppose was rough and untrimmed; and not only so, but rude and ungovernable, and would disturb and disgrace the solemnity. This *colt* was borrowed too. Christ went upon the water in a *borrowed boat*, eat the passover in a *borrowed chamber*, was buried in a *borrowed sepulchre*, and here rode on a *borrowed ass*. Let not Christians scorn to be beholden one to another, and when need is to go a borrowing, for our Master did not. He had no rich trappings, they threw their clothes upon the colt, and so he *sat upon him*, *ver. 7.* The persons that attended were mean people; and all the shew they could make, was by *spreading their garments in the way*, and *strewing branches of trees in the way*, *ver. 8.* as they used to do at the feast of tabernacles. All these were marks of his humiliation, even when he would be taken notice of, he would be taken notice of for his meanness; and they are instructions to us not to *mind high things*, but to *condescend to them of low estate*. How ill doth it become Christians to *take state*, when Christ was so far from affecting it?

Secondly,



Secondly, the *inside* of this triumph was very *great*, not only as it was the fulfilling of the scripture, which is not taken notice of here as it was in Matthew, but as there were several rays of Christ's glory, shining forth in the midst of all this meanness. (1.) Christ shewed his knowledge of things distant, and his power over the wills of men, when he sent his disciples for the colt, *ver. 1, 2, 3, 4.* By this it appears he can *do every thing, and no thought can be withholden from him.* (2.) He shewed his dominion over the *creatures*, in riding on a colt that was *never backed.* The subjection of the inferior part of the creation to man, is spoken of, *Psal. viii. 5, 6.* with application to Christ, *Psal. viii. 5, 6.* compared with, *Heb. ii. 8.* For to him it is owing, and to his mediation, that we have any remaining benefit, by that grant God made to man, of a sovereignty in this lower world, *Gen. i. 28.* And perhaps Christ, in riding the ass's colt, would give a shadow of his power over the spirit of man, who is born as *the wild asses colt*, *Job xi. 12.* (3.) The colt was brought from a place *where two ways met*, *ver. 4.* as if Christ would shew that he came to direct those into the right way, who had *two ways* before them, and were in danger of taking the wrong. (4.) Christ received the joyful *hosannas* of the people; that is, both the *welcome* they gave him, and their *good wishes* to the prosperity of his kingdom, *ver. 9.* It was God that put it into the hearts of these people, to cry *hosanna*, who were not by art and management brought to it, as those were who afterwards cried, *Crucify, crucify.* Christ reckons himself honoured by the faith and praises of the multitude, and it is God that brings people to do him this honour, beyond their own intentions.

1. They *welcomed* his person, *ver. 9.* *Blessed is he that cometh, the ἐρχόμενος, He that should come,* so often promised, so long expected; he comes *in the name of the Lord*, as God's embassador to the world, *Blessed be he:* Let him have our applauses, and best affections; he is a *blessed Saviour*, and brings blessings to us, and blessed be he that sent him. Let him be *blessed in the name of the Lord*, and let all nations and ages call him *blessed*, and think and speak highly and honourably of him.

2. They *wished well* to his interest, *ver. 10.* They believed, that as mean a figure as he made, he had a *kingdom*, which should shortly be set up in the world, that it was the kingdom of *their father David*, (that father of his country) the kingdom promised to him and his seed for ever; a kingdom that came *in the name of the Lord*, supported by a divine authority. *Blessed be this kingdom*; let it take place, let it get ground, let it come in the power of it, and let all opposing rule, principality and power be put down; let it go on *conquering, and to conquer.* *Hosanna* to this kingdom; prosperity be to it; all happiness attend it. The proper signification of *hosanna* is that which we find, *Rev. vii. 10.* *Salvation to our God that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, i. e. success to religion, both natural and revealed.* *Hosannah in the highest.* Praises be to our God, who is in the *highest heavens* over all, God blessed for ever; or, let him be praised by his angels, that are *in the highest heavens*, let our *hosannas* be an echo to theirs.

Christ thus *attended*, thus *applauded*, came into the city, and went directly *to the temple*: Here was no banquet of wine prepared for his entertainment, nor the least refreshment, but he immediately applied himself to his work, for that was his *meat and drink.* He went *to the temple*, that the scripture might be fulfilled: *The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple,* without sending any immediate notice before him; he shall surprise you with a *day of visitation*, for he shall be *like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's sope*, *Mal. iii. 1, 2, 3.* He came to the temple, and took a view of the present state of it, *ver. 11.* He *looked round about upon all things*; but, as yet, said nothing. He saw many disorders there, but *kept silence*, *Psal. l. 21.* Though he intended to suppress them, he would not go about the doing of it *all on a sudden*, lest he should seem to have done it *rashly*; but let things be as they were for this night, intending, the next morning, to apply himself to the necessary reformation, and to take the day before him. We may be confident, that God sees all the wickedness that is in the world, though he do not presently reckon for it, nor cast it out. Christ having made his remarks upon what he saw in the temple, retired in the evening to a friend's house at Bethany, because there he would be more out of the noise of the town, and out of the way of being suspected, as designing to head a faction.

12. ¶ And on the morrow when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry. 13. And seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. 14. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. 15. ¶ And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; 16. And

would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. 17. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. 18. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. 19. And when even was come, he went out of the city. 20. ¶ And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. 21. And Peter calling to remembrance, saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst, is withered away. 22. And Jesus answering, saith unto them, have faith in God. 23. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. 25. And when ye stand, praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Here is, 1. Christ's cursing the fruitless fig-tree. He had a convenient resting place at Bethany, and therefore thither he went at resting time, but his work lay at Jerusalem, and thither therefore he returned in the morning, at working time; and so intent was he upon his work, that he went out from Bethany without breakfast, which before he was gone far he found the want of, and *was hungry*, *ver. 12.* for he was subject to all the fineness infirmities of our nature. Finding himself in want of food, he went to a *fig-tree*, which he saw at some distance, that being well adorned with *green leaves*, he hoped to find *enriched* with some sort of fruit. But he *found nothing but leaves*; he hoped to find some fruit, *for the time of gathering in figs*, though it was near, yet it *was not yet*; so that it could not be pretended, that it had had fruit, but it was gathered and gone; for it was not come to that yet. Or, he found none, for indeed *it was not a season of figs*, it was no good fig-year. But this was worse than any other fig-tree, for there was not so much as one fig to be found upon it, though it was so full of leaves. However Christ was willing to make an example of it, not to the trees, but to the men of that generation, and therefore cursed it, with that curse which is the reverse of the first blessing, *Be fruitful*; he said unto it, never let any man *eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever*, *ver. 14.* *Sweetness and good fruit* is, in Jotham's parable, the honour of the *fig-tree*, *Judg. ix. 11.* and its serviceableness therein to man, preferable to the preferment of being *promoted over the trees*; now to be deprived of that was a grievous *curse*. This was intended to be a type and figure of the doom passed upon the Jewish church, to which he came *seeking fruit but found none*, *Luke xiii. 6, 7.* and though it was not according to the doom in the parable immediately cut down, yet, according to this in the history, *blindness* and *hardness* beset them, *Rom. xi. 8, 25.* so that they were from henceforth *good for nothing*. The *disciples heard* what sentence Christ passed on this tree, and took notice of it. Woes from Christ's mouth are to be observed and kept in mind, as well as blessings.

2. His clearing the temple of the market-people that frequented it, and of those that made it a thorough-fare. We do not find that Christ met with food elsewhere, when he missed of it on the fig-tree; but the zeal of God's house so eat him up, and made him forget himself, that he came hungry as he was to Jerusalem, and went straight to the temple, and began to reform those abuses, which the day before he had marked out; to shew, that when the Redeemer came to Zion, his errand was to *turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, *Rom. xi. 26.* and that he came not, as he was falsely accused, to *destroy* the temple, but to purify and refine it, and reduce his church to its primitive rectitude.

1. He cast out the *buyers and sellers, overthrew the tables of the money-changers* (and threw the money to the ground, the fitter place for it) and threw down the *seats of them that sold doves*. This he did as one having authority, as *a son in his own house*. The filth of the daughter of Zion is purged away, not by might, nor by power, but by *the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning*; and he did it without opposition, for what he did was manifested to be right and good, even in the consciences of those that had connived at it, and countenanced it; because they got money by it. Note, It may be some encouragement to zealous reformers, that many times the purging out of corruptions, and the correcting of abuses, proves an easier piece of work than was apprehended. Prudent attempts sometimes prove successful



cessful beyond expectation, and there are not those lions found in the way that were feared to be.

2. He would not suffer, that any man should carry any vessel, any sort of goods or wares, through the temple, or any of courts the of it; because it was the nearer way, and would save them the labour of going about, *ver. 16.* The Jews owned it was one of the instances of honour due to the temple, not to make the mountain of the house, or the court of the Gentiles, a road or common passage, or to come into it with any bundle.

3. He gave a good reason for this; because it was written, *My house shall be called of all nations, The house of prayer, ver. 17.* So it is written, *Isa. lvi. 7.* It shall pass among all people under that character. *It shall be the house of prayer to all nations,* it was so in the first institution of it; when Solomon dedicated it, it was with an eye to the sons of the strangers, *1 Kings viii. 41.* And it was prophesied, that it should be yet more so; Christ will have the temple, as a type of the gospel church, to be, (1.) A house of prayer; after he had turned out the oxen and doves, which were things for sacrifice, he revived the appointment of it as a house of prayer, to teach us, that when all sacrifices and offerings should be abolished, the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, should continue and remain for ever. (2.) That it should be so to all nations, and not to the people of the Jews only; for *whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,* though not of the seed of Jacob, according to the flesh. It was therefore insufferable for them to make it a den of thieves, which would prejudice those nations against it, whom they should have invited to it. When Christ drove out the buyers and sellers at the beginning of his ministry, he only charged them with making the temple a house of merchandise, *John ii. 16.* But now he chargeth them with making it a den of thieves, because since then, they had twice gone about to stone him in the temple, *John viii. ult. -x. 31.* or because the traders there, were grown notorious for cheating their customers, and imposing upon the ignorance and necessity of the country people, which is no better than downright thievery. Those that suffer vain, worldly thoughts to lodge within them, when they are at their devotions; turn the house of prayer, into a house of merchandise: But they that make long prayers for a pretence to devour widows houses, turn it into a den of thieves.

4. The scribes and the chief priests were extremely nettled at this, *ver. 18.* They hated him, and hated to be reformed by him, and yet they feared him, lest he should next overthrow their seats, and expel them, being conscious to themselves of the profaning and abusing of their power. They found he had a great interest, and that all the people were astonished at his doctrine, and every thing he said was an oracle, and a law to them, and what durst he not attempt, what could he not effect, being thus supported? They therefore sought not how they might make their peace with him, but how they might destroy him: A desperate attempt! and which, one would think, they themselves could not but fear, was fighting against God. But they care not what they do, to support their own power and grandeur.

3. His discourse with his disciples, upon occasion of the fig-tree's withering away which he had cursed. At even, as usual, he went out of the city, *ver. 19.* to Bethany, but it is probable it was in the dark, so that they could not see the fig-tree; but the next morning, as they passed by, they observed the fig-tree dried up from the roots, *ver. 20.* More is included many times in Christ's curses, than is expressed, as appears by the effects of them. The curse was no more, but that it should never bear fruit again, but the effect goes further, it is dried up from the roots. If it bear no fruit, it shall bear no leaves to cheat people. Now observe,

1. How the disciples were affected with it. Peter remembered Christ's words, and said with surprise, *Master, behold the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away, ver. 21.* Note, Christ's curses have wonderful effects; and make those to wither presently, that flourished like the green bay-tree. *Those whom he curseth, they are cursed indeed.* This represented the character and state of the Jewish church; which, from hence forward, was a tree dried up from the roots; no longer fit for food, but for fuel only. The first establishment of the Levitical priesthood was ratified and confirmed by the miracle of a dry rod, which in one night budded and blossomed, and brought forth almonds, *Numb. xvii. 8.* a happy omen of the fruitfulness and flourishing of that priesthood: And now, by a contrary miracle, the expiration of that priesthood was signified by a flourishing tree dried up in a night; the just punishment of those priests that had abused it. And this seemed very strange to the disciples, and scarce credible, that the Jews, that had been so long God's own, his only professing people in the world, should be thus abandoned. They could not imagine, how that fig-tree should so soon wither away, but this comes of rejecting Christ, and being rejected by him.

2. The good instructions Christ gave them from it, for of those even this withered tree was fruitful.

1. Christ teacheth them from hence to pray in faith, *ver. 22.* Have faith in God. They admired the power of Christ's word of command, why, faith Christ, a lively active faith would put as great a power into your prayers, *ver. 23, 24.* Whosoever shall say to

this mountain, this mount of Olives, Be removed, and be cast in the sea: If he has but any word of God, general or particular, build his faith upon, and if he shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith, according to the warrant he has, from what God hath said, shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith; through the strength and power of God in Christ, the greatest difficulty shall be got over, and the thing shall be effected. And therefore, *ver. 24.* What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them; nay, believe that ye do receive them, and he that has power to give them, shall ye shall have them. I say unto you, ye shall, *ver. 24.* Verily I say unto you, ye shall, *ver. 23.* Now this is to be applied, (1.) To that faith of miracles, which the apostles and first preachers of the gospel were endued with, which did wonders in things natural, healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out devils; these were, in effect, the removing of mountains. The apostle speaks of a faith which would do that, and yet might be found where holy love was not, *1 Cor. xiii. 2.* (2.) It may be applied to that miracle of faith, which all true Christians are endued with, which doth wonders in things spiritual. It justifies us, *Rom. v. 1.* and so removes mountains of guilt, and casts them into the depths of the sea, never to rise up in judgment against us, *Mic. vii. 19.* It purifies the heart, *Acts xv. 10.* and so removes mountains of corruption, and makes them plain before the grace of God, *Zech. iv. 7.* It is by faith that the world is conquered, Satan's fiery darts quenched, a soul is crucified with Christ, and yet lives; by faith we set the Lord always before us, and see him that is invisible, and have him present to our minds, and this is effectual to remove mountains; for at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, the mountains were not only moved, but removed, *Psal. cxiv. 6, 7.*

2. To this is added here, that necessary qualification of the prevailing prayer, that we freely forgive those who have been any way injurious to us, and be in charity with all men, *ver. 25, 26.* When ye stand praying, forgive. Note, Standing is no improper posture for prayer; it was generally used among the Jews; hence they called their prayers, their standings; when they would say how the world was kept up by prayer, they expressed it thus, *Stationibus stat mundus:* But the primitive Christians generally used the more humble and reverent gesture of kneeling, especially on fasting days, though not on Lord's days. When we are at prayer, we must remember to pray for others, particularly for our enemies, and those that have wronged us; now we cannot pray sincerely that God would do them good, if we bear malice to them, and wish them ill. If we have injured others before we pray, we must go and be reconciled to them, *Matt. v. 23.* But if they have injured us, we go a nearer way to work, and must immediately from our hearts forgive them. (1.) Because this is a good step towards obtaining the pardon of our own sins: Forgive, that your Father may forgive you, i. e. That you may be qualified to receive forgiveness, that he may forgive you without injury to his honour, as it would be, if he should suffer those to have such benefit by his mercy, as are so far from being conformable to the pattern of it. (2.) Because the want of this is a certain bar to the obtaining of the pardon of our sins. If ye do not forgive those who have injured you, if you hate their persons, bear them a grudge, meditate revenge, and take all occasions to speak ill of them, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. This ought to be remembered in prayer, because one great errand we have to the throne of grace, is to pray for the pardon of our sins: And care about it ought to be our daily care, because prayer is a part of our daily work. Our Saviour often insists on this, for it was his great design, to engage his disciples to love one another.

27. ¶ And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, 28. And say unto him, by what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority to do these things? 29. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. 31. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven, he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? 32. But if we shall say, Of men, they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. 33. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

We have here Christ examined by the great Sanhedrin, concerning his authority; for they claimed a power to call prophets to an account concerning their mission. They came to him when he was walking in the temple, not for his diversion, but teaching the



the people, first one company and then another. The Peripatetic philosophers were so called from the custom they had of walking when they taught. The cloysters or piazzas in the courts of the temple, were fitted for this purpose: The great men were vexed to see him followed, and heard with attention, and therefore came to him with some solemnity, and did as it were arraign him at the bar with this question, *By what authority doest thou these things?* ver. 28. Now observe,

1. How they designed hereby to run him a-ground, and to embarrass him; if they could make it out before the people that he had not a *legal mission*, that he was not duly *ordained*, though he was never so well qualified, and preached never so profitably and well, they would tell the people they *ought not to hear him*. And this they made the last refuge of an obstinate unbelief, because they were resolved not to receive his doctrine, they were resolved to find some flaw or other in his commission, and will conclude it invalid, if it be not produced and ratified in their court. Thus the Papists resolve their controversy with us very much into the mission of our ministers, and if they have but any pretence to overthrow that, they think they have gained their point, though we have the scripture never so much on our side. But this is indeed a question, which all that act either as magistrates or ministers, ought to be furnished with a good answer to, and often put it to themselves, *By what authority do I these things?* For how can men preach except they be sent? Or how can they act with comfort or confidence, or hope of success, except they be authorized? *Jer. xxxiii. 32.*

2. How he effectually run them a-ground, and embarrassed them with a question, what their thoughts were concerning the baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? By what authority did John preach, and baptize, and gather disciples? *Answer me*, ver. 30. Deal fairly and ingenuously, and give a categorical answer either one way or the other. By the resolving of their question into this, our Saviour intimates how near a-kin his doctrine and baptism was to John's; they had the same original, and the same design and tendency to introduce the gospel kingdom. Christ might with the better grace put this question to them, because they had sent a committee of their own house to examine John, *John i. 19.* Now, faith Christ, what was the result of your enquiries concerning him?

They knew what they thought of this question; they could not but think that John Baptist was a man sent of God. But, the difficulty was what they should say to it now: And men that oblige not themselves to speak as they think, which is a certain rule, cannot avoid perplexing themselves thus.

1. If they own the baptism of John to be from heaven, as really it was, they shame themselves, for Christ will presently turn it upon them, *why did ye not then believe him*, and receive his baptism? They could not bear that Christ should say this, but they could bear it that their own consciences should say so, because they had an art of stifling, and silencing them, and because what conscience said, though it might gall and grate them a little, it would not shame them, and then they would do well enough, who looked no further than Saul's care when he was convicted, *Honour me now before this people*, 1 Sam. xv. 30.

2. If they say it is of men, that he was not sent of God, but his doctrine and baptism were inventions of his own, they expose themselves, the people will be ready to do them a mischief, or at least clamour upon them; for all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed, and therefore they could not bear that he should be reflected on. Note, There is a carnal slavish fear, which not only wicked subjects, but wicked rulers likewise are liable to, which God makes use of as a means to keep the world in some order, and to suppress violence, that it shall not always grow up into a rod of wickedness. Now by this dilemma to which Christ brought them, (1.) They were confounded and baffled, and forced to make a dishonourable retreat; to pretend ignorance, *we cannot tell* (and that was mortification enough to those proud men) but really to discover the greatest malice and wilfulness. What Christ did by his wisdom, we must labour to do by our well-doing, *put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*. 1 Pet. ii. 15. (2.) Christ came off with honour, and justified himself in denying to give them an answer to their imperious demand, *Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things*. They did not deserve to be told; who, it was plain, did not contend for truth but victory; nor did he need to tell them, for the works which he did told them plainly that he had authority from God to do what he did; since no man could do those miracles which he did unless God were with them. Let them wait but three or four days, and his resurrection shall tell them who gave him his authority, for by that he will be declared to be the Son of God with power, as by their rejecting him notwithstanding, they will be declared to be the enemies of God.



## C H A P. XII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The parable of the vineyard let out to unthankful husbandmen, representing the sin and ruin of the Jewish church, ver. 1—12. (2.) Christ's silencing those who thought to ensnare him with a question about paying tribute to Cæsar, ver. 13—17. (3.) His silencing the Sadducees, who attempted to perplex the doctrine of the resurrection, ver. 18—27. (4.) His conference with a scribe about the first and great command of the law, ver. 28—34. (5.) His puzzling the scribes with a question about Christ's being the Son of David, ver. 35—37. (6.) The caution he gave the people to take heed of the scribes, ver. 38—40. (7.) His commendation of the poor widow that cast her two mites into the treasury, ver. 41—44.

1. **A**ND he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the wine-fat; and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. 2. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. 3. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. 4. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. 5. And again he sent another; and him they killed: and many others, beating some, and killing some. 6. Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. 7. But those husbandmen said amongst themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. 8. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. 9. What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. 10. And have ye not read this scripture? The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. 11. This was the Lords doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. 12. And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people; for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

Christ had formerly in parables shewed how he designed to set up the gospel church, now he begins in parables to shew how he would lay aside the Jewish church, which it might have been grafted into the stock of, but was built upon the ruins of. This parable was had just as we have it here, *Matt. xxi. 33.* We may observe here,

1. They that enjoy the privileges of the visible church, have a vineyard let out to them, which is capable of great improvement, and from the occupiers of which rent is justly expected. When God shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel, *Psal. cxlvii. 19.* when he set up his temple among them, his priesthood, and other his ordinances; then he let out to them the vineyard he had planted; which he hedged, and in which he built a tower, ver. 1. Members of the church are God's tenants, and they have both a good landlord, and a good bargain; and may live well upon it, if it be not their own fault.

2. Those whom God lets out his vineyard to, he sends his servants to, to put them in mind of his just expectations from them, ver. 2. He was not hasty in his demands, nor high, for he did not send for the rent till they could make it, at the season; nor did he put them to the trouble of making money of it, but was willing to take it in specie.

3. It is sad to think what base usage God's faithful ministers have met with in all ages, from those that have enjoyed the privileges of the church, and have not brought forth fruit answerable. The Old Testament prophets were persecuted even by those that went under the name of the Old Testament church. They beat them and sent them empty away, ver. 3. That was bad; they wounded them, and sent them away shamefully entreated, ver. 4. That was worse: Nay, at length they came to such a pitch of wickedness, that they killed them, ver. 5.

4. It was no wonder if those who abused the prophets, abused Christ himself. God did at length send them his Son, his well-beloved; it was therefore so much the greater kindness in him to send him, as in Jacob to send Joseph to visit his brethren, *Gen. xxxvii. 14.* And it might be expected that he whom their



Master loved, they also should respect and love, *ver. 6.* *They will reverence my son,* and in reverence to him will pay their rent. But instead of *reverencing* him because he was the son and heir, they therefore hated him, *ver. 7.* Because Christ, in calling to repentance and reformation, made his demands with more authority than the prophets had done, they were the more enraged against him, and determined to put him to death, that they might engross all church-power to themselves, and all the respects and obedience of the people might be paid to them only. *The inheritance shall be ours,* we will be lords paramount, and bear all the sway. There is an *inheritance*, which if they had duly *reverenced the Son*, might have been theirs, a heavenly inheritance, but they slighted that, and would have their inheritance in the wealth, and pomp, and powers of this world. So they *took him, and killed him*; they had not done it yet, but they would do it in a little time; and they *cast him out of the vineyard*, i. e. they refused to admit his gospel when he was gone; it would by no means agree with their scheme, and so they threw it out with disdain and detestation.

5. For such sinful shameful doings nothing can be expected but a fearful doom, *ver. 9.* *What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do?* It is easy to say what, for nothing could be done more provoking. 1. He will *come and destroy the husbandmen*, whom he would have saved. When they only denied the fruit, he did not *distrain* upon them for the rent, nor *disseize* them and *dispossess* them for non-payment; but when they killed his servants, and his Son, he determined to *destroy* them; and this was fulfilled when Jerusalem was laid waste, and the Jewish nation extirpated, and made a desolation.

2. He will *give the vineyard to others*. If he have not the rent from them, he will have it from another people, for God will be no loser by any. This was fulfilled in the taking in of the Gentiles, and the abundance of fruit which the *gospel brought forth in all the world*, Col. i. 6. Note, If some, from whom we expected well, prove bad, it doth not follow but that others will be better. Christ encouraged himself with this in his undertaking, *Though Israel be not gathered*, not gathered to him, but gathered against him, *yet shall I be glorious*, Isa. xlix. 5, 6. as a *light to lighten the Gentiles*.

3. Their opposition to Christ's exaltation, shall be no obstruction to it, *ver. 10, 11.* *The stone which the builders rejected*, notwithstanding that, is become *the head of the corner*, is highly advanced as the *head-stone*, and of necessary use and influence as the *corner-stone*. God will set Christ as *his King* upon his *holy hill of Zion*, in spite of their project who would *break his bands asunder*. And all the world shall see and own this to be *the Lord's doing*, in justice to the Jews, and in compassion to the Gentiles. The exaltation of Christ *was the Lord's doing*, and it is *his doing* to exalt him in our hearts, and to set up his throne there, and if it be done, it cannot but be marvellous in our eyes.

Now what effect had this parable upon the chief priests and scribes, whose conviction was designed by it? They knew *he spake this parable against them*, *ver. 12.* They could not but see their own faces in the glass of it; and one would think it shewed them their sin so very heinous, and their ruin so certain and great, that it should have frightened them into a compliance with Christ and his gospel, should have prevailed to bring them to repentance, at least to make them desist from their malicious purpose against him; but instead of that, (1.) They *sought to lay hold on him*, and make him their prisoner immediately, and so to fulfil what he had just now said they would do to him, *ver. 8.* (2.) Nothing restrained them from it but the awe they stood in of the people; they did not *reverence* Christ, nor had any *fear of God* before their eyes, but were afraid if they should publicly lay hold on Christ, the mob would rise and lay hold on them and rescue him. (3.) They *left him and went their way*; if they could not do hurt to him, they resolved he should not do good to them, and therefore they got out of the hearing of his powerful preaching, *lest they should be converted and healed*. Note, If mens prejudices be not conquered by the evidence of truth, they are but confirmed; and if the corruptions of the heart be not subdued by faithful reproofs, they are but enraged and exasperated. If the gospel be not a *savour of life unto life*, it will be a *savour of death unto death*.

13. ¶ And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees, and of the Herodians, to catch him in *his words*. 14. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? 15. Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. 16. And they brought it: and he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsars. 17. And Jesus answering, said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things

that are Cæsars, and to God the things that are Gods. And they marvelled at him.

When the enemies of Christ, who thirsted for his blood, could not find occasion against him from what he said against them, they tried to ensnare him by putting questions to him. Here we have him tempted, or attempted rather, with a question about the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar: We had this story, *Matt. xxii. 15.*

1. The persons they employed were the Pharisees and the Herodians, men that in this matter were contrary to one another, and yet concurred against Christ, *ver. 13.* The Pharisees were great sticklers for the Jews liberty, and if he should say it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, they would incense the common people against him, and the Herodians would underhand assist them in it: The Herodians were great sticklers for the Roman power, and if he should discountenance the paying of tribute to Cæsar, they would incense the governor against him, yea, and the Pharisees against their own principles would join with them in it. It is no new thing for those that are at variance in other things, to join in a confederacy against Christ.

2. The pretence they made was, that they desired him to resolve them a case of conscience, which was of great importance in the present juncture; and they take on them to have a mighty opinion of his ability to resolve it, *ver. 14.* They complimented him at a high rate, called him *Master*, owned him for a teacher of the *way of God*, a teacher of it *in truth*, he taught what was good, and upon principles of truth, that he would not be brought by smiles or frowns to depart a step from the rules of equity and goodness; *thou carest for no man*, nor *regardest the person of men*, thou art not afraid of offending either the jealous prince on one hand, or the jealous people on the other; *thou art right*, and always in the right, and dost in a right manner declare good and evil, truth and falsehood. If they spoke as they thought concerning Christ, when they said, *we know that thou art right*, their persecuting him, and putting him to death as a deceiver, was a sin against knowledge; they knew him and yet crucified him. However a man's testimony shall be taken most strongly against himself, and *out of their own mouths are they judged*; they knew that he taught the way of God in truth, and yet rejected the counsel of God against themselves. The professions and pretences of hypocrites will be produced in evidence against them, and they will be self-condemned: But if they did not know or believe it, they *lied unto God with their mouth, and flattered him with their tongue*.

3. The question they put was, *Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?* They would be thought desirous to know their duty: *As a nation that did righteousness, they ask of God the ordinances of justice*, when really they desired nothing but to know what he would say, in hopes that which side soever he took of the question, they might take occasion from it to accuse him. Nothing more likely to ensnare ministers, than bringing them to meddle with controversies about civil rights, and to settle land-marks between the prince and the subject, which it is fit should be done, but not at all fit that they should have the doing of it. They seemed to refer the determining of this matter to Christ, and he indeed was fit to determine it, for *by him kings reign, and princes decree justice*; for they put the question fairly, *Shall we give, or shall we not give?* They seemed resolved to stand to his award; and if thou sayest we must pay tribute, we will do it, though we be made beggars by it: If thou sayest we must not, we will not, though we be made traitors for it. Many seem desirous to know their duty that are no ways disposed to do it, as those proud men, *Jer. xlii. 20.*

4. Christ determined the question, and evaded the snare, by referring them to their national concessions, already made, by which they were precluded from disputing this matter, *ver. 15, 16, 17.* He *knew their hypocrisy*, the malice that was in their hearts against him, while *with their mouth they shewed all this love*. Hypocrisy, though never so artfully managed, cannot be concealed from the Lord Jesus: He sees the *pothard* that is covered with the *silver dross*: He knew they intended to ensnare him, and therefore contrived the matter so as to ensnare them, and to oblige them by their own words to do what they were unwilling to do, which was to pay their taxes honestly and quietly, and yet at the same time to screen himself against their exceptions. He made them acknowledge that the current money of their nation was Roman money, had the emperor's image on one side, and his *superscription* on the reverse; and if so, (1.) *Cæsar* might command their money for the publick benefit, because he has the custody and conduct of the state, wherein he ought to have his charges born; *Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*. The circulation of the money is from him as the fountain, and therefore it must return to him. As far as it is *his*, so far it must be rendered to him, and how far it is *his*, and may be commanded by him, is to be judged by the constitution of the government, according as it is and hath settled the prerogative of the prince, and the property of the subject. (2.) *Cæsar* might not command their consciences, nor did he pretend to it; he offered not to make any alteration in their religion. Pay your tribute therefore without



without murmuring or disputing, but be sure to *render to God the things that are God's*. Perhaps, referring to the parable he had just now put forth, in which he had condemned them for not rendering the fruits to the Lord of the vineyard, *ver. 2*. Many that seem careful to give to men their due, are in no care to give unto God *the glory due to his name*; whereas our hearts and best affections are as much due to him as ever rent was to a landlord, or tribute to a prince. All that heard Christ *marvelled* at the discretion of his answer, and how ingeniously he avoided the snare; but I doubt none were brought by it, as they ought to be, to render to God themselves and their devotions. Many will commend the wit of a sermon, that will not be commanded by the divine laws of a sermon.

18. ¶ Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, 19. Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 20. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. 21. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. 22. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. 23. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. 24. And Jesus answering, said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? 25. For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage: but are as the angels which are in heaven. 26. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? 27. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

The Sadducees that were the deists of that age here attack our Lord Jesus, it should seem, not as the scribes and Pharisees, and chief-priests, with any malicious design upon his person; they were not bigots and persecutors, but scepticks and infidels, and their design was upon his doctrine, to hinder the spreading of that: they denied that there was any resurrection, any world of spirits, any state of rewards and punishments on the other side death: now those great and fundamental truths which they denied, Christ had made it his business to establish and prove, and had carried the notion of them much further than ever it was before carried; and therefore they set themselves to perplex his doctrine.

1. See here the method they take to entangle it; they quote the ancient law, by which, if a man died without issue, his brother was obliged to marry his widow, *ver. 19*. They suppose a case to happen, that according to that law seven brothers were successively the husbands of one woman, *ver. 20*. Probably these Sadducees according to their wonted profaneness intended hereby to ridicule that law, and so to bring the whole frame of the Mosaic institution into contempt, as absurd and inconvenient in the practice of it. Those who deny divine truths, commonly set themselves to disparage divine laws and ordinances. But this only by the by; their design was to expose the doctrine of the resurrection; for they suppose that if there be a future state, it must be such a one as this, and then the doctrine they think is clogged either with this invincible absurdity, that a woman in that state must have seven husbands; or else with this unsolvable difficulty, whose wife she must be. See with what subtilty these hereticks undermine the truth; they do not deny it, nor say *there can be no resurrection*; nay, they do not seem to doubt of it, nor say, *If there be a resurrection*, whose wife shall she be? as the devil to Christ, *If thou be the Son of God*; but as though these beasts of the field were more subtle than the serpent himself; they pretend to own the truth, as if they were not Sadducees, no not they, who said they denied the resurrection. They take it for granted there is a resurrection, and would be thought to desire instruction concerning it, when really they are designing to give it a fatal stab, and think they shall do it. Note, It is the common artifice of hereticks and Sadducees to perplex and entangle the truth, which they have not the impudence to deny.

2. See here the method Christ takes to clear and establish this truth, which they attempted to darken and give a shock to. This was a matter of moment, and therefore Christ doth not pass it over lightly, but enlargeth upon it, that if they should not be reclaimed, yet others might be confirmed.

1. He chargeth the Sadducees with *error*, and chargeth that upon their *ignorance*. They who banter the doctrine of the re-

surrection, as some do in our age, would be thought the only knowing men, because the only *free-thinkers*, when really they are the fools in Israel, and the most *enslaved* and prejudiced thinkers in the world. *Do ye not therefore err?* ye cannot but be sensible of it yourselves, and that the cause of your error is (1.) Because ye do not *know the scriptures*; not but that the Sadducees had read the scriptures, and perhaps were ready in them, and yet they might be truly said not to *know the scriptures*, because they did not know the sense and meaning of them, but put false constructions upon them, or they did not receive the scriptures, as the word of God, but set up their own corrupt reasonings in opposition to the scripture, and would believe nothing but what they could see. Note, A right knowledge of the scripture, as the fountain whence all revealed religion now flows, and the foundation on which it is built, is the best preservative against error. Keep the truth, the scripture truth, and it shall keep thee. (2.) Because you *know not the power of God*. They could not but know that God is almighty, but they would not apply that doctrine to this matter, but gave up the truth to the objections of the impossibility of it, which would all have been answered if they had but stuck to the doctrine of God's omnipotence; to which *nothing is impossible*. This therefore which God hath spoken once, we are concerned to hear twice, to hear and believe, to hear and apply, that *power belongs to God*, *Psal. lxii. 10*. *Rom. iv. 19, 20, 21*. The same power that made soul and body, and preserved them while they were together, can preserve the body safe, and the soul active, when they are parted, and can unite them together again, for *behold, the Lord's arm is not shortened*. The power of God seen in the return of the spring, *Psal. civ. 30*. in the reviving of the corn, *John xii. 24*. in the restoring of an abject people to their prosperity, *Ezek. xxxviii. 12, 13, 14*. in the raising so many to life miraculously both in the Old Testament and in the New, and especially in the resurrection of Christ, *Ephes. i. 19, 20*. are all earnest of our resurrection by the same power, *Phil. iii. 21*. *According to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself*.

2. He sets aside all the force of their objection, by setting the doctrine of the future state in a true light, *ver. 25*. *When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage*. It is folly to ask, *Whose wife shall she be of the seven?* when the relation between husband and wife, though instituted in the earthly paradise, will not be known in the heavenly one. Turks and Infidels expect sensual pleasures in their fools paradises, but Christians *know better things*, *That flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, *1 Cor. xv. 50*. and expect better things, even a full satisfaction in God's love and likeness, *Psal. xvii. 14, 15*. they are *as the angels of God in heaven*, and we know they have neither wives nor children. It is no wonder if we confound ourselves with endless absurdities, when we measure our ideas of the world of spirits, by the affairs of this world of sense.

4. He builds the doctrine of the future state, and of the blessedness of the righteous in that state, upon the covenant of God with Abraham, which God was pleased to own, being after Abraham's death, *ver. 26, 27*. He appeals to the scriptures, *Have ye not read in the book of Moses?* We have some advantage in dealing with those that have read the scriptures, though many that have read them *wrest them*, as these Sadducees did, to *their own destruction*. Now that which he refers them to is what God said to Moses at the bush, *I am the God of Abraham*, not only I was so, but I *am* so; I am the portion and happiness of Abraham, a God all-sufficient to him. Note, It is absurd to think that God's relation to Abraham should be continued, and thus solemnly recognized, if Abraham was annihilated, or that the *living God* should be the portion and happiness of a man that is dead, and must be for ever so; and therefore you must conclude, (1.) That Abraham's soul exists and acts in a state of separation from the body. (2.) That therefore some time or other the body must rise again, for there is such an innate inclination in a human soul towards its body, as would make a total and everlasting separation inconsistent with the ease and repose, much more with the bliss and joy of those souls, that have the Lord for their God. Upon the whole matter he concludes, *ye therefore do greatly err*. Those that deny the resurrection greatly err, and ought to be told so.

28. ¶ And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? 29. And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord; 30. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. 31. And the second is like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self: there is none other commandment greater than these. 32. And the scribe said unto him, Well Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God,



God, and there is none other but he. 33. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. 34. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

The scribes and Pharisees were (however bad otherwise, yet) enemies to the Sadducees; now one would have expected, that when they heard Christ argue so well against the Sadducees, they should have countenanced him, as they did Paul, when he appeared against the Sadducees, *Acts* xxiii. 9. but it had not that effect; because he did not fall in with them in the ceremonials of religion, his agreeing with them in the essentials, gained him no manner of respect with them. Only we have here an account of *one* of them, a scribe who had so much civility in him as to take notice of Christ's answer to the Sadducees, and to own that he had *answered well*, and much to the purpose, *ver.* 28. and we have reason to hope he did not join with other the scribes, in persecuting Christ; for here we have his application to Christ for instruction, and it was such as became him; not tempting Christ, but desiring to improve his acquaintance with him.

1. He enquired, *which is the first commandment of all?* *ver.* 28. He doth not mean the *first* in order, but the first in weight and dignity; which is that command, which we ought to have in a special manner an eye to, and our obedience to which, will lay a foundation for our obedience to all the rest? Not that any commandment of God is little, they are all the commands of a great God, but some are greater than others, moral precepts than rituals, and of some we may say, they are the *greatest of all*.

2. Christ gave him a direct answer to this enquiry, *ver.* 29, 30, 31. Those that sincerely desire to be instructed concerning their duty, Christ will *guide in judgment*, and *teach his way*. He tells him,

(1.) That the great commandment of all, which is indeed inclusive of all, is, that of *loving God with all our hearts*; (1.) Where this is the commanding principle in the soul, there is a disposition to every other duty. Love is the leading affection of the soul, the love of God is the leading grace in the renewed soul. (2.) Where this is not, nothing else that is good is done, or not done aright, or not accepted, or not done long. Loving God with all our heart, will effectually take us off from, and arm us against, all those things that are rivals with him for the throne in our souls, and will engage us to every thing by which he may be honoured, and with which he will be pleased. And no commandment will be grievous, where this principle commands, and has the ascendant. Now here in Mark, our Saviour prefixeth to this command, the great doctrinal truth upon which it is built, *ver.* 29. *Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord*; if we firmly believe this, it will follow, that we shall love him *with all our heart*; he is Jehovah, who has all amiable perfections in himself; he is *our God*, to whom we stand related, and obliged; and therefore we ought to *love him*, to set our affections on him, let out our desire towards him, and take a delight in him; and he is *one Lord*, therefore he must be loved with our *whole heart*; he has the sole *right to us*, and therefore ought to have the sole *possession of us*. If he be one, our hearts must be one with him, and since there is no God but he, no rival must be admitted with him upon the throne.

(2.) That the second great commandment is to *love our neighbour as ourselves*, *ver.* 31. as truly and sincerely as we love ourselves, and in the same instances, and we must shew it by *doing as we would be done by*. As we must therefore love God better than ourselves, because he is Jehovah, a being infinitely better than we are; and must love him with *all our heart*, because he is *one Lord*, and there is no other like him; so we must *love our neighbour as ourselves*, because he is of the same nature with ourselves; our hearts are fashioned alike, and my neighbour and my self are of one body, of one society, that of the world of mankind; and if a fellow Christian, and of the same sacred society, the obligation is the stronger. *Has not one God created us?* *Mal.* ii. 10. *Has not one Christ redeemed us?* Well might Christ say, *There is no other commandment greater than these*, for in these all the law is fulfilled; and if we make conscience of obedience, to these, all other instances of obedience will follow of course.

3. The scribe consented to what Christ said, and descanted upon it, *ver.* 32, 33. (1.) He commends Christ's decision of this question; *Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth*. Christ's assertions needed not the scribe's attestations, but this scribe being a man in authority, thought it would put some reputation upon what Christ said to have it commended by him; and it shall be brought in evidence against those who persecuted Christ, as a deceiver, that one of themselves, even a scribe of their own, confessed that he *said the truth*, and said it *well*. And thus must we subscribe to Christ's sayings, must set to our seal that they are true. (2.) He comments upon it; Christ had quoted that great

doctrine, *That the Lord our God is one Lord*, and this he not only assented to, but added, and *there is none other but he*; and therefore we must have no other God but him. This excludes all rivals with him, and secures the throne in the heart entire for him. Christ had laid down that great law of loving God *with all our heart*; and this also he explains, that it is loving him *with the understanding*, as those that know what abundant reason we have to love him; our love to God, as it must be an *entire*, so it must be an *intelligent* love: we must love him with *all the understanding*, *ἐξ ὅλης τῆς συνέσεως*, *out of the whole understanding*, our rational powers and faculties must all be set on work to lead out the affections of our souls towards God. Christ had said, *That to love God and our neighbour is the greatest commandment of all*, yea, saith the scribe, it is better, it is *more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices*. More acceptable to God, and will turn to a better account to ourselves. There were those who held, *That the law of sacrifices was the greatest commandment of all*, but this scribe readily agreed with our Saviour in this, that the law of love to God and our neighbour is greater than that of *sacrifice*, even than that of *whole burnt-offerings*, which were intended purely for the honour of God.

4. Christ approved of what he said, and encouraged him to proceed in his enquiries of him, *ver.* 34. (1.) He owned that he understood himself well as far as he went; so far, so good; *Jesus saw that he answered discreetly*, and was the more pleased with it, because he had of late met with so many even of the scribes, men of letters, that answered *indiscreetly*, as those that had *no understanding*, nor desired to have any. He answered *ὡς ἓως*, as one that had a mind; as a rational intelligent man, as one that had his wits about him. As one whose reason was not blinded, whose judgment was not biased, and whose forethought was not fettered by the prejudices, which other scribes were so much under the power of. He answered as one that allowed himself liberty and leisure to consider, and as one that had considered. (2.) He owned that he stood fair for a further advance; *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*, the kingdom of grace and glory; thou art in a likely way to be a Christian, a disciple of Christ. For the doctrine of Christ insists most upon these things, and is designed, and has a tendency direct to bring thee to this. Note, There is hope of those who make a good use of the light they have, and go as far as that will carry them, that by the grace of God, they will be led further, by the clearer discoveries God has to make to them. What came of this scribe we are not told, but would willingly hope that he took the hint Christ hereby gave him, and that having been told by him so much to his satisfaction, what was the great commandment of the law, he proceeded to enquire of him, or his apostles, what was the great commandment of the gospel too! yet if he did not, but took up here and went no further, we are not to think it strange, for there are many who are *not far from the kingdom of God*, and yet never come thither. Now one would think, this should have invited many to consult him: but it had a contrary effect, *no man after that durst ask him any question*; every thing he said was spoken with such authority and majesty, that every one stood in awe of him; those that desired to *learn* were *ashamed* to ask, and those that designed to *cavil* were *afraid* to ask.

35. ¶ And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? 36. For David himself said by the holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand; till I make thine enemies thy footstool. 37. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he *then* his son? And the common people heard him gladly. 38. ¶ And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market-places, 39. And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: 40. Which devour widows houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

Here, 1. Christ shews the people, how weak and defective the scribes were in their preaching, and how unable to solve the difficulties that occurred in the scriptures of the Old Testament, which they undertook to expound. Of this he gives an instance, which is not so fully related here, as it was in Matthew. Christ was *teaching in the temple*, and many things he said which were not written; but notice is taken of this, because it will stir us up to enquire *concerning Christ*, and to enquire *of him*: for none can have the right knowledge of him but *from himself*; it is not to be had from *the scribes*, for they will soon be run a-ground.

1. They told the people, that the Messiah was to be the *son of David*, *ver.* 35. and they were in the right; he was *not* only to descend from his loins, but to fill his throne, *Luke* i. 32. *The Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David*. The



The scripture said it often, but the people took it, as what the scribes said, whereas the truths of God should rather be quoted from our Bibles than from our ministers, for there is the original of them, *Dulcius ex ipso fonte bibuntur aquæ.*

2. Yet they could not tell them how, notwithstanding that it was very proper for David in Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy, to call him *his Lord*, as he doth, *Psal. cx. 1.* They had taught the people, that concerning the Messiah which would be for the honour of their nation, that he should be a branch of their royal family; but had not taken care to teach them that which was the honour of the Messiah himself, that he should be the Son of God, and as such, and not otherwise, *David's Lord*; thus they *held the truth in unrighteousness*, and were *partial* in the gospel, as well as in the law of the Old Testament. They were able to say it, and prove it, that Christ was to be David's son, but if any should object, *how then doth David himself call him Lord*, they would not know how to avoid the force of the objection. Note, Those are unworthy to sit in Moses's seat, who, though they are able to preach the truth, are not in some measure able to defend it, when they have preached it, and to convince gain-sayers.

Now this galled the scribes, to have their ignorance thus exposed, and, no doubt, incensed them more against Christ; but the common people heard him gladly, ver. 37. What he preached was surprizing and affecting, and though it reflected upon the scribes, it was instructive to them, and they had never heard such preaching. Probably there was something more than ordinary commanding and charming in his voice and way of delivery, which recommended him to the affections of the common people; for we do not find, that any were wrought upon to believe in him, and to follow him, but he was to them as a *lovely song of one that could play well on an instrument*, as Ezekiel was to his hearers, *Ezek. xxxiii. 32.* And perhaps some of these cried, *Crucify him*, as Herod heard John Baptist gladly, and yet cut off his head.

2. He cautions the people to take heed of suffering themselves to be imposed upon by the scribes, and of being infected with their pride and hypocrisy. *He said unto them in his doctrine, beware of the scribes*, ver. 38. stand upon your guard, that you neither imbibe their peculiar opinions, nor the opinions of the people concerning them. It was a long charge drawn up against them in the parallel place, *Matt. xxiii.* it is here contracted.

1. They affect to appear *very great*; for they go in *long clothing*, with vestures *down to their feet*, and in those they walk about the streets, as princes, or judges, or gentlemen of the long robe. Their going in such clothing was not sinful, but their *loving* to go in it, priding themselves in it, valuing themselves by it, commanding respect by it, saying to their long clothes, as Saul to Samuel, *Honour me now before this people*, this was a product of pride. Christ would have his disciples go with *their loins girt*.

2. They affect to appear *very good*; for they pray, they make *long prayers*, as if they were very intimate with heaven, and had a deal of business there. They took care it should be known that they prayed, that they prayed long, which, some think, intimates, that they prayed not for themselves only, but for others, and therein were very particular and very large; this they did for a pretence, that they might seem to love prayer, not only for God's sake, whom hereby they pretended to glorify; but for their neighbour's sake, whom hereby they pretended to be serviceable to.

3. They herein aimed to *advance* themselves; they coveted applause, and were fond of it; they loved *salutations in the market-places*, and the *chief seats in the synagogues*, and the *uppermost rooms at feasts*, these pleased a vain fancy; to have these given them, they thought expressed the value they had for them that did know them, and gained them respect from those that did not.

4. They herein aimed to *enrich* themselves. They *devoured widows houses*, made themselves masters of their estates by some trick or other, and it was to screen themselves from the suspicion of dishonesty, that they put on the mask of piety; and that they might not be thought as bad as the worst, they were studious to seem as good as the best. Let fraud and oppression be thought the worse of, for their having *profaned* and *disgraced* long prayers; but let not prayers, no nor *long prayers* be thought the worse of, if made in humility and sincerity, for their having been by some thus abused. But as iniquity thus disguised with a shew of piety, is double iniquity, so its doom will be doubly heavy; *these shall receive greater damnation*, greater than those that live without prayer; greater than they should have received for the wrong done to the poor widows, if it had not been thus disguised. Note, The damnation of hypocrites will be of all other the greatest damnation.

41. ¶ And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. 42. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. 43. And he called unto

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him his disciples, and faith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury. 44. For all they did cast in of their abundance: but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

This passage of story was not in Matthew, but is here, and in Luke; it is Christ's commendation of the poor widow, that cast *two mites* into the treasury, which our Saviour, as busy as he was in preaching, found leisure to take notice of. Observe,

1. There was a *publick fund* for charity, into which contributions were brought, and out of which distributions were made; a poor's-box, and this in *the temple*; for works of charity, and works of piety very fitly go together; where God is honoured by our worship, it is proper he should be honoured by the relief of his poor; and we often find *prayers* and *alms* in conjunction, as *Acts xx. 1, 2.* It is good to erect publick receptacles of charity, for the inviting and directing of private hands in giving to the poor; nay it is good for those who are of ability to have funds of their own, to *lay by as God has prospered them*, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. that they may have something ready to give, when an object of charity offers it self, which is before dedicated to such uses.

2. Jesus Christ had *an eye* upon it. *He sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into it*; not grudging either that he had none to cast in, or had not the disposal of that which was cast in, but observing what was cast in. Note, Our Lord Jesus takes notice what we contribute to pious and charitable uses; whether we give liberally, or give sparingly; whether cheerfully, or with reluctance and ill-will; nay, he looks at the heart; he observes what principles we act upon, and what our views are in giving alms; and whether we do it as unto the Lord, or only to be seen of men.

3. He saw *many that were rich cast in much*; and it was a good sight, to see rich people charitable, to see *many* rich people so, and to see them not only cast in, but cast in *much*; Note, Those that are rich, ought to give richly; if God give abundantly to us, he expects we should give abundantly to the poor; and it is not enough for those that are rich to say, they give as much as others do, who perhaps have much less of the world than they have, but they must give in proportion to their estates; and if objects of charity do not present themselves that require so much, they ought to enquire them out, and to *devise liberal things*.

4. There was a *poor widow that cast in two mites, which make a farthing*, ver. 42. And our Lord Jesus highly commended her; called his disciples to him, and bid them take notice of it, ver. 43. tells them she could very ill spare that which she gave, she had scarce enough for her self, it was *all her living*, all she had to live upon for that day, and perhaps a great part of what she had earned by her labour the day before; and that forasmuch as he knew she did it from a truly charitable disposition, he reckoned it more than all that put together, which the rich people threw in; for they did *cast in of their abundance*, but she of *her want*, ver. 44. Now many would have been ready to censure this *poor widow*, and to think she did ill; why should she give to others, when she had little enough for her self? Charity begins at home; or, if she would give it, why did she not bestow it upon some poor body that she knew, what need she bring it to the *treasury* to be disposed of by the chief priests, who we have reason to fear were partial in the disposal of it? It is so rare a thing to find any that would not blame this widow, that we cannot expect to find any that will imitate her, and yet our Saviour commends her, and therefore we are sure she did very well and wisely; if Christ saith *well-done*, no matter who saith otherwise; and we must from hence learn, (1.) That *giving alms* is an excellent good thing, and highly pleasing to the Lord Jesus; and if we be humble and sincere in it, he will graciously accept of it, though in some circumstances there may not be all the discretion in the world. (2.) Those that have but a *little*, yet ought to give alms out of *their little*. Those that live by their labour, from hand to mouth, yet must *give to those that need*; Eph. iv. 28. (3.) It is very good for us to straiten and deny our selves, that we may be able to give the more to the poor; not only to deny our selves superfluities, but even conveniences for the sake of charity; we should in many cases pinch our selves, that we may supply others necessities; this is loving our neighbours as our selves. (4.) Publick charities should be encouraged, for they bring upon a nation publick blessings; and though there may be some mismanagement of them, yet that is not a good reason, why we should not bring in our *quota* to them. (5.) Though we can give but a *little* in charity, yet if it be according to our ability, and be given with an upright heart, it shall be accepted of Christ, who requires *according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not*; two mites shall be put upon the score and brought to account, if given in a right manner, as if it had been two pounds. (6.) It is much to the praise of charity, when we give not only *to our power*, but *beyond our power*, as the Macedonian churches, whose *deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality*, 2 Cor. viii. 2, 3. When we can cheerfully provide for others, out of our own necessary provision,



Provision, as the widow of Sarepta for Elijah, and Christ for his five thousand guests, and trust God to provide for us some other way, *this is thank-worthy.*

## C H A P. XIII.

*We have here the substance of that prophetic sermon, which our Lord Jesus preached, pointing at the destruction of Jerusalem, and the consummation of all things; it was one of the last of his sermons, and not ad populum, but ad clerum; it was private, preached only to four of his disciples, with whom his secret was. Here is, 1. The occasion of his prediction, his disciples admiring the buildings of the temple, ver. 1, 2. and their enquiry, concerning the time of the desolation of them, ver. 3, 4. 2. The predictions themselves, (1.) Of the rise of deceivers, ver. 5, 6, 21, 22, 23. (2.) Of the wars of the nations, ver. 7, 8. (3.) Of the persecution of Christians, ver. 9—13. (4.) Of the destruction of Jerusalem, ver. 14—20. (5.) Of the end of world, ver. 24—27. (3.) Some general intimations concerning the time of them, ver. 28—32. (4.) Some practical inferences from all, ver. 33—37.*

1. **A**ND as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here. 2. And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, over against the temple, Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, asked him privately, 4. Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

We may here see,

1. How apt many of Christ's own disciples are to idolize things that look great, and have been long looked upon as sacred; they had heard Christ complain of those who had made the temple a den of thieves, and yet, when he quitted it for the wickedness that remained in it, they court him to be as much in love, as they were, with the stately structure and adorning of it. One of them said to him, look, Master, what manner of stones, and what buildings are here, ver. 1. We never saw the like in Galilee; O do not leave this fine place.

2. How little Christ values external pomp, where there is not real purity; *seest thou these great buildings?* saith Christ, and thou admirest them? I tell thee, the time is at hand, when *there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*, ver. 2. And the sumptuousness of the fabrick shall be no security to it, no nor move any compassion in the Lord Jesus towards it. He looks with pity upon the ruin of precious souls, and weeps over them, for on them he has put a great value; but we do not find him look with any pity upon the ruin of a magnificent house, when he is driven out of it by sin, for that is of small value with him. With what little concern doth he say, *not one stone shall be left on another!* Much of the strength of the temple lay in the largeness of the stones, and if these be thrown down, no footstep, no remembrance of it will remain. While any part remained standing, there might be some hopes of the repair of it, but what hope is there, when not one stone is left upon another?

3. How natural it is to us to desire to know things to come, and the times of them; more inquisitive we are apt to be about that, than about our duty. His disciples knew not how to digest this doctrine of the ruin of the temple, which they thought must be their Master's royal palace, and in which they expected their preferment, and to have the posts of honour; and therefore were in pain till they got him alone, and got more out of him concerning this matter. As he was returning to Bethany therefore, he sat upon the mount of Olives, over against the temple, where he had a full view of it; and there four of them agreed to ask him privately, what he meant by the destroying of the temple, which they understood no more than they did the predictions of his own death, so inconsistent was it with their scheme. Probably, though these four proposed the question, yet Christ's discourse in answer to it was in the hearing of the rest of the disciples, yet privately, i. e. a-part from the multitude. Their enquiry is, *When shall these things be?* They will not question, at least not seem to question, whether they shall be or no, for their Master has said they shall, but are willing to hope, it is a great way off. Yet they ask not precisely the day and year, therein they were modest, but tell us, *What shall be the sign, when all these things shall be fulfilled?* What presages shall there be of them, and how may we prognosticate their approach?

5. And Jesus answering them, began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you. 6. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 7. And when ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. 8. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines, and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows. 9. ¶ But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten, and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. 10. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. 11. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the holy Ghost. 12. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son: and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. 13. And ye shall be hated of all men for my names sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Our Lord Jesus in reply to their question, sets himself not so much to satisfy their curiosity, as to direct their consciences: leaves them still in the dark, concerning the times and seasons, which the Father has kept in his own power, and which it was not for them to know: But gives them the cautions which were needful, with reference to the events that should now shortly come to pass.

1. They must take heed, that they be not deceived by the seducers and impostors that should now shortly arise, ver. 5, 6. Take heed lest any man deceive you, lest having found the true Messiah, you lose him again in the crowd of pretenders; or be inveigled to embrace others in rivalry with him. Many shall come in my name, not in the name of Jesus, but saying I am Christ, and so claiming the dignities which I only am intitled to. After the Jews had rejected the true Christ, they were imposed upon, and so exposed by many false christs, but never before; those false christs deceived many, therefore take heed lest they deceive you. Note, When many are deceived, we should thereby be awakened to look to our selves.

2. They must take heed, that they be not disturbed at the noise of wars, which they should be alarmed with, ver. 7, 8. Sin introduced wars, and they come from mens lusts. But at some times the nations are more distracted and wasted with wars, than at other times; so it shall be now; Christ was born into the world when there was a general peace, but soon after he went out of the world there were general wars; nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And what will become of them then, who are to preach the gospel to every nation? *Inter arma silent leges.* But be not troubled at it. (1.) Let it be no surprise to you, you are bid to expect it, and such things must needs be, for God has appointed them, in order to the further accomplishment of his purposes, and by the wars of the Jews (which Josephus has given us a large account of) God will punish the wickedness of the Jews. (2.) Let it be no terror to you, as if your interest were in danger of being overthrown, or your work obstructed, by these wars; you have no concern in them, and therefore need not be apprehensive of any damage by them. Note, Those that despise the smiles of the world, and do not court and covet them, may despise the frowns of the world, and need not fear them. If we seek not to rise with them that rise in the world, why should we dread falling with them that fall in the world. (3.) Let it not be looked upon as an omen of the approaching period of the world, for the end is not yet, ver. 7. Think not that these wars will bring the world to a period, no, there are other intermediate counsels to be fulfilled betwixt, and the end of all things, which are designed to prepare you for the end, but not to hasten it out of due time. (4.) Let it not be looked upon as if in them God had done his worst, no, he has more arrows in his quiver, and they are ordained against the persecutors; be not troubled at the wars you shall hear of, for they are but the beginnings of sorrows, and therefore instead of being disturbed at them, you ought to prepare for worse; for there shall also be earthquakes in divers places, which shall bury multitudes in the ruins of their own houses, and there shall be famines, by which many of the poor shall perish for want of bread, and troubles and commotions; so that there shall be no peace to him that goes out, or comes in. The world shall be full of troubles, but be not ye troubled; without are fightings, within are fears, but fear not ye their fear. Note, The disciples of Christ, if it be not their own fault,



ult, may enjoy a holy security and serenity of mind; when all about them is in the greatest disorder.

3. They must take heed that they be not *drawn away* from Christ, and from their duty to him by the sufferings they should meet with for Christ's sake. Again, he saith, *take heed to your selves*, ver. 9. Though you may escape the *sword of war*, better than some of your neighbours, because you interest not your self in the publick quarrels, yet be not secure; you will be exposed to the *sword of justice* more than others, and the parties that contend with one another will unite against you. *Take heed* therefore lest you *deceive* your selves with the hopes of outward prosperity, and such a temporal kingdom as you have been dreaming of, when it is *through many tribulations that you must enter into the kingdom of God*. Take heed lest you needlessly expose your selves to trouble, and pull it upon your own head: *Take heed* what you say and do, for you will have many eyes upon you. Observe;

1. What the trouble is they must expect.

(1.) They shall be *hated of all men*; trouble enough! The thoughts of *being hated* are grievous to a tender spirit, and the fruits of that hatred must needs be a constant vexation; those that are *malicious* will be *mischievous*. It was not for any thing amiss in them, or done amiss by them, that they were *hated*, but for Christ's name sake, because they were called by his name, called upon his name, preached his name, and wrought miracles in his name. The world hated them, because he loved them.

(2.) Their own *relations* shall *betray* them, those to whom they were most nearly allied, and on whom therefore they depended for protection; they *shall betray you*, shall inform against you, and be your prosecutors: If a father has a child that is a Christian, he shall become void of natural affection, it shall all be swallowed up in bigotry, and he shall betray his own child to the persecutors, as if he were a worshipper of other gods. Deut. xiii. 6.

(3.) Their *church rulers* shall inflict *their censures* upon them. You shall be *delivered up* to the great Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, and to the inferior courts and consistories in other cities, and shall be *beaten in the synagogues* with forty stripes at a time, as offenders against the law, which was read in the synagogue. It is no new thing for the church's artillery, through the treachery of its officers, to be turned against some of its best friends.

(4.) *Governours* and *kings* shall use their power against them: Because the Jews have not power to put them to death, they shall incense the Roman powers against them, as they did Herod against James and Peter, and they shall *cause you to be put to death*, as enemies to the empire. They must resist unto blood, and still resist.

2. What they shall have to comfort themselves with in the midst of these great and fore troubles.

1. That the work they were called to should be carried on and prosper, notwithstanding all this opposition they should meet with in it, ver. 10. *The gospel* shall, for all this, be *published among all nations*, and before the destruction of Jerusalem the *sound* of it shall *go forth into all the earth*; not only through all the nation of the Jews, but to all the nations of the earth. It is comfort to those who suffer for the gospel, that though they may be crushed, and born down, the gospel cannot; it shall keep its ground and carry the day.

2. That their sufferings, instead of obstructing their work, should forward it; your being *brought before governours and kings* shall be for a *testimony to them*, so some read it, ver. 9. It shall give you an opportunity of preaching the gospel to those before whom you are brought as criminals, to whom otherwise you could not have access. Thus St. Paul's being brought before Felix, and Festus, and Agrippa, and Nero, was a testimony to them concerning Christ and his gospel. Or, as we read it, it shall be for a *testimony against them*, against both the judges and the prosecutors, who pursue those with the utmost rage that appear upon examination, to be not only innocent, but excellent persons. The gospel is a testimony to us concerning Christ and heaven; if we receive it, it will be a testimony for us, it will justify and save us; if not, it will be a testimony *against* us in the great day.

3. That when they were brought before kings and governours for Christ's sake, they should have special assistance from heaven to plead Christ's cause and their own, ver. 11. *Take no thought before-hand what ye shall speak*, be not solicitous how to address your selves to great men, so as to obtain their favour, your cause is just and glorious, and needs not to be supported by premeditated speeches and harangues: But *whatsoever shall be given you in that hour*, whatsoever shall be suggested to you, and put into your minds, and into your mouths, *pro re nata*, that *speak* you, and fear not the success of it, because it is *off-hand*, for it is not *ye that speak* purely by the strength of your own wisdom, consideration, and resolution, but it is *the holy Ghost*. Note, Those whom Christ calls out to be advocates for him, shall be furnished with full instructions: And when we are engaged in the service of Christ, we may depend upon the aids of the Spirit of Christ.

4. That heaven at last would *make amends for all*. You will meet with a great deal of hardship in your way, but have a good

heart on it, your warfare will be accomplished, and your testimony finished, and *he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved*, ver. 13. Perseverance gains the crown. The salvation here promised is more than a deliverance from evil, it is an everlasting blessedness, which will be an abundant recompence for all their services and sufferings. All this we have, Matt. x. 17, &c.

14. ¶ But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth, understand) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: 15. And let him that is on the house-top, not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house. 16. And let him that is in the field, not turn back again for to take up his garment. 17. But wo to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days. 18. And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. 19. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created, unto this time, neither shall be. 20. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elects sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days. 21. And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ, or lo, he is there: believe him not. 22. For false Christs, and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. 23. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

The Jews, in rebelling against the Romans, and in persecuting the Christians, were hastening their own ruin apace, both efficiently and meritoriously were setting both God and man against them, see 1 Thes. ii. 15. Now here we have a prediction of that ruin which came upon them, within less than forty years after this: We had it before, Matt. xxiv. 15, &c. Observe,

1. What is here foretold concerning it.

(1.) That the Roman *armies* should make a descent upon Judea, and invest Jerusalem, the holy city. These were the *abomination of desolation*, which the Jews did *abominate*, and by which they should be made *desolate*. The country of thine enemy is called the *land which thou abhorrest*, Isa. vii. 16. Therefore it was an abomination because it brought with it nothing but desolation. They had rejected Christ as an *abomination*, who would have been their *salvation*; and now God brought upon them an abomination that would be their *desolation*, thus spoken of by Daniel the prophet, chap. ix. 27. as that by which this sacrifice and offering should be made to cease. This army stood *where it ought not*, in and about the *holy city*, which the heathen ought not to have approached, nor should have been suffered to do, if Jerusalem had not first profaned the crown of their holiness. This the church complains of, Lam. i. 10. *The heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into the congregation*; but sin made the breach, at which the glory went out, and the abomination of desolation broke in, and stood *where it ought not*. Now, let him that readeth this understand it, and endeavour to take it right. Prophecies should not be too plain, and yet intelligible to those that search them; and they are best understood, by comparing them first with one another, and at last with the event.

(2.) That when the Roman *army* should come into the country, there would be no safety any where but by quitting the country, and that with all possible expedition; it will be in vain to *fight*, the enemies will be too hard for them, in vain to *abscond*, the enemies will find them out, and in vain to *capitulate*, the enemies will give them no quarter; a man cannot have so much as his life given him for a prey, but by *fleeing to the mountains*, out of Judea, and let him take the first alarm, and make the best of his way. If he be *on the house-top*, trying from thence to discover the motions of the enemy, and spies them coming, let him not *go down to take any thing out of the house*, for it will lose time, which is more precious than his best goods, and will but encumber him, and embarrass his flight; if he be in the field, and there discovers the approach of the enemy, let him get away as he is, and not *turn back again to take up his garment*, ver. 16. If he can save his life, let him reckon it a good bargain, though he can save nothing else; and be thankful to God, that though he is cut short, he is not cut off.

(3.) That it would go very hard at that time with poor mothers and nurses, ver. 17. *Wo to them that are with child*, that dare not go into strange places, that cannot shift for themselves, nor make haste as others can. And *wo to them that give suck*, that know not how either to leave the tender infants behind them, or to carry them along with them. Such is the vanity of the creature, that the time may often be, when the greatest comforts may prove the greatest burthens. It would likewise be very uncomfortable, if they should be forced to flee in



*the winter*, ver. 18. when the *weather* and *ways* were bad, when the roads will be scarce passable, especially in those mountains to which they must flee. If there be no remedy but that trouble must come, yet we may desire and pray, that, if it be God's will, the circumstances of it may be so ordered, as to be a mitigation of the trouble; and when things are bad, we ought to consider they might have been worse. It is bad to be forced to flee, but it would have been worse if it had been *in the winter*.

(4.) That throughout all the country of the Jews, there should be such destruction and desolation made, as could not be paralleled in any history, *ver. 19. In those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of time*, that is, of the creation which God created, for time and the creation are of equal date, *unto this day, neither shall be to the end of time*. Such a complication of miseries, and of such continuance. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans was very terrible, but this exceeded it. It threatened an universal slaughter of all the people of the Jews, so barbarously did they devour one another, and the Romans devour them all; that if their wars had continued a little longer, *no flesh could have been saved*, not one Jew could have been left alive; but in the midst of wrath God remembered mercy; and, (1.) He *shortened the days*, he let fall his controversy before he had *made a full end*. As a church and nation the ruin was complete, but many particular persons had their lives gained them for a prey, by the storm *taking up* when it did. (2.) It was *for the elect's sake*, that those days were shortened; many among them fared the better, for the sake of the few among them that believed in Christ, and were faithful to him. There was a promise, that *a remnant should be saved*, Isa. x. 22. and that God would not, for his servants sakes, *destroy them all*, Isa. lxv. 9. and these promises must be fulfilled; God's own *elect cry day and night to him*, and their prayers must be answered, *Luke xviii. 7*.

2. What directions are given to the disciples with reference to it.

1. They must shift for the safety of *their lives*; when you see the country invaded, and the city invested, flatter not your selves with thoughts that the enemy will retire, or that you may be able to make your part good with them; but without further deliberation or delay, *let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains*, ver. 14. Meddle not with strife that *belongs not to you*; *let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth*, but do you go out of the ship when you see it sinking, that you die not the death of *the uncircumcised* in heart.

2. They must provide for the safety of *their souls*; seducers will be busy at that time, for they love to fish in troubled waters, and therefore then you must double your guard; *then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ*, or, *Lo, he is there*, you know he is in heaven, and will come again at the end of time to judge the world, and therefore *believe them not*; having received *Christ*, be not drawn into the snares of any *antichrist*; for *false christs*, and *false prophets shall arise*, ver. 22. When the gospel kingdom was in the setting up, Satan mustered all his force to oppose it, and made use of all his wiles; and God permitted it for the trial of the sincerity of some, and the discovery of the hypocrisy of others, and the confusion of those who rejected Christ, when he was offered to them. *False christs shall rise*, and false prophets that shall preach them up; or such, as though they pretend not to be christs set up for *prophets*, and undertake to foretel things to come, and they shall *show signs and lying wonders*; so early did the *mystery of iniquity* begin to work, 2 Thes. i. 7. *They shall seduce, if it were possible, the very elect*; so plausible shall their pretences be, and so industrious shall they be to impose upon people, that they shall draw away many that were forward and zealous professors of religion, many that were very likely to have persevered, for nothing will be effectual to secure men but that foundation of God which stands immoveably sure, *The Lord knows them that are his*, who shall be preserved when the faith of some is overthrown; 2 Tim. ii. 18, 19. *They shall seduce, if it were possible, the very elect*; but it is not possible to seduce them; the *election shall obtain*, whoever are *blinded*, Rom. xi. 7. But in consideration hereof, let the disciples be cautious who they give credit to, ver. 23. But *take ye heed*, Christ knew they were of the *elect*, who could not possibly be *seduced*, and yet he said to them, *take heed*. An assurance of persevering, and cautions against apostasy, will very well consist. Though Christ said to them, *take heed*, it doth not therefore follow, that their perseverance was doubtful, for they were kept by the power of God; and though their perseverance was secured, yet it doth not therefore follow that this caution was needless, because they must be kept in the use of proper means: God will keep them, but they must keep themselves. *I have foretold you all things*; have foretold you of this danger, that being forewarned, you may be forearmed; I have foretold *all things*, which you needed to have foretold to you, and therefore take heed of hearkning to such as pretend to be prophets, and to foretel more than I have foretold. The sufficiency of the scripture is a good argument against listening to such as pretend to inspiration.

24. ¶ But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give

her light: 25. And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. 26. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 27. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth, to the uttermost part of heaven.

These verses seem to point at Christ's second coming to judge the world; the disciples in their question, had confounded the *destruction* of Jerusalem, and the *end of the world*, Matt. xxiv. 3 which was built upon a mistake, as if the temple must needs stand as long as the world stands; this mistake Christ rectifies, and shews, that the *end of the world, in those days*; those other days you enquire about, the day of Christ's coming, and the day of judgment, shall be *after that tribulation*, and not coincident with it; let those that live to see the Jewish nation destroyed, take heed of thinking that because the Son of man doth not visibly come in the clouds *then*, he will never *so* come; no, he will never come *after that*. And here he foretels,

1. The final dissolution of the present frame and fabrick of the world; even of that part of it which seems least liable to change, even the upper part; the purer and more refined part; the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall no more give her light; for they shall be quite out-shone by the glory of the Son of man, Isa. xxiv. 23. The stars of heaven, that from the beginning had kept their place and regular motion, shall fall as leaves in autumn; and the powers that are in heaven, the heavenly bodies, the fixed stars, shall be shaken.

2. The visible appearance of the Lord Jesus, to whom the judgment of that day shall be committed, ver. 26. *Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds*. Probably over that very place where he sat, when he said this; for the clouds are in the lower region of the air. He shall come with great power and glory, such as will be suited to the errand on which he comes. *Every eye shall then see him*.

3. The gathering together of all the elect to him, ver. 27. He shall send his angels, and gather together his elect to him, to meet him in the air, 1 Thes. iv. 17. They shall be fetched from one end of the world to the other, so that none shall be missing from that general assembly; they shall be fetched from the uttermost parts of the earth, most remote from the place where Christ's tribunal shall be set, and shall be brought to the uttermost part of heaven; so sure, so swift, so easy, shall their conveyance be, that there shall none of them miscarry, though they were to be brought from the uttermost of the earth one way, to the uttermost part of the heaven another way. A faithful Israelite shall be carried safely, though it were from the utmost border of the land of bondage, to the utmost border of the land of promise.

28. Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: 29. So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. 30. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. 31. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. 32. ¶ But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. 33. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. 34. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. 35. Watch ye therefore; (for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning) 36. Lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. 37. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.

We have here the application of this prophetic sermon; now learn to look forward in a right manner.

1. As to the destruction of Jerusalem, expect it to come very shortly; as when the branch of the fig-tree becomes soft, and the leaves sprout forth, ye expect that summer will come shortly, ver. 28. When second causes begin to work, you expect their effects in their proper order and time. So when ye see these things come to pass, when you see the Jewish nation embroiled in wars, distracted by false christs, and prophets, and drawing upon them the displeasure of the Romans, especially when you see them persecuting you for your Master's sake, and thereby standing to what they did, when they put him to death, and repeating it, and so filling up the measure of their iniquity, then say, that their ruin is nigh, even at the door, and provide for yourselves accordingly. The disciples themselves were indeed all of them, except John, taken away from the evil to come, but the next generation whom



whom they were to train up, would live to see it; and by these instructions Christ left behind him, would be kept from shaming in it. *This generation* that is now rising up, shall not all be worn off, before *all these things* come to pass which I have told you of relating to Jerusalem, and they shall begin to take effect now shortly. And as this destruction is near and within ken, so it is sure: The decree is gone forth, it is a *consumption determined*, Dan. ix. 27. Christ doth not speak these things only to frighten them; no, they are the declarations of God's fixed purpose; *Heaven and earth shall pass away*, at the end of time: But *my words shall not pass away*, ver. 31. not one of these predictions shall fail of a punctual accomplishment.

2. As to the *end of the world*, do not enquire when it will come, for it is not a question fit to be asked, for of *that day*, and *that hour*, *knoweth no man*; it is a thing at a great distance, the exact time is fixed in the counsel of God, but is not revealed by any word of God, either to *men* on earth, or to *angels in heaven*; the angels shall have timely notice to prepare to attend in that day, and it shall be published when it comes to the children of men with sound of trumpet; but at present *men* and *angels* are kept in the dark, concerning the precise time of it, that they both attend to their proper services in the present day. But it follows, *neither the Son*, but is there any thing which the Son is ignorant of? We read indeed of a book which was sealed, till the Lamb opened the seals, but did not he know what was in it before the seals were opened? Was not he conscious to the writing of it? There were those in the primitive times who taught from this text, that there were some things that Christ as man was ignorant of; and from thence were called *Agnostæ*; they said it was no more absurd to say so, than to say that his human soul suffered grief, and fear; and many of the orthodox fathers approved of this. Some would evade it by saying that Christ spoke this in a way of prudential oeconomy, to divert the disciples from further enquiry: but to this one of the ancients answers, that it is not fit to speak too nicely in this matter, *ὁ δεῖ πάντῃ ἀκριβολογεῖν*, so Leontius in Dr. Hammond, "It is certain (saith archbishop Tillotson) that Christ, as God, could not be ignorant of any thing, but the divine wisdom which dwelt in our Saviour, did communicate itself to his human soul, according to the divine pleasure; so that his human nature might at sometimes not know some things, therefore Christ is said to grow in wisdom, Luke ii. 52. Which he could not be said to do, if the human nature of Christ did necessarily know all things, by virtue of its union with the divinity." Dr. Lightfoot explains it thus. Christ calls himself the Son, as Messiah. Now the Messiah, as such, was the Father's servant, *Isa. xlii. 1.* sent, and deputed by him, and as such a one, he refers himself often to his Father's will and command, and owns he *did nothing of himself*, John v. 19. and in like manner he might be said to *know nothing of himself*. The revelation of Jesus Christ was what *God gave unto him*, Rev. i. 1. He thinks therefore we are to distinguish between those excellencies and perfections of his, which resulted from the personal union between the divine and human nature, and those which flowed from the anointing of the Spirit; from the former flowed the infinite dignity of his person, and his perfect freedom from all sin; but from the latter flowed his power of working miracles, and his fore-knowledge of things to come: What therefore (saith he) were to be revealed by him to his church, he was pleased to take, not from the union of the human nature with the divine, but from the revelation of the Spirit, by which he yet knew not this, but the Father only knows it; that is, God only, the deity; for (as archbishop Tillotson explains it) it is not used here *personally*, in distinction from the Son and the Holy Ghost, but as the Father is, *Fons & Principium Deitatis*.

3. As to both, their duty is to *watch and pray*. Therefore the time is kept a secret, that we might be engaged to stand always upon our guard, ver. 33. *Take ye heed* of every thing that would indispose you for your Master's coming, and would render your accounts *perplexed*, and your spirits so too; *watch* for his coming, that it may not at any time be a surprize to you, and *pray* for that grace which is necessary to qualify you for it, for *ye know not when the time is*; and we are concerned to be ready for that *every day*, which may come *any day*. This he illustrates in the close, by a parable.

1. Our Master is gone away, and left us something in trust, in charge, which we must give account of, ver. 34. He is *as a man taking a far journey*, for he is gone to be away a great while, he has *left his house* on earth, and left his servants in their offices, gave *authority* to some who were to be overseers, and *work* to others that were to be labourers; they that have *authority* given them, in that had *work* assigned them, for those that have the greatest *power*, have the most *business*; and to them to whom he gave *work*, he gave some sort of *authority* to do that work. And when he took his last leave, he *appointed the porter to watch*, to be sure to be ready to open to him at his return; and in the mean time to take care to whom he opened his gates, not to thieves and robbers, but only to his master's friends and servants. Thus our Lord Jesus, when he *ascended on high*, left something for all his servants to do, expecting they should all do him service in his

absence, and be ready to receive him at his return. *All* are appointed to work, and some authorized to rule.

2. We ought to be always upon our watch, in expectation of his return, ver. 35, 36, 37. (1.) Our Lord *will come*, and will come as the *master of the house*, to take account of his servants, and of their work, and of the improvement they have made. (2.) We know not *when he will come*; and he has very wisely kept us at uncertainty, that we might be always ready. We know not *when he will come*, just at what precise time; the *master of the house* perhaps will come *at even*, at nine at night; or it may be *at midnight*, or at *cock-crowing* at three in the morning, or perhaps not till six. This is applicable to his coming to us, in particular, at our death, as well as to the general judgment. Our present life is a *night*, a dark night, compared with the other life, we know not in which watch of the night our Master will come, whether in the days of youth, or middle age, or old age, but as soon as we are born we begin to die, and therefore, as soon as we are capable of expecting any thing, we must expect death. (3.) Our great care must be, that whenever our Lord comes, he do not *find us sleeping*; secure in ourselves, off our guard, indulging ourselves in ease and sloth, mindless of our work and duty, and thoughtless of our Lord's coming; *ready* to say he will not come, and *unready* to meet him. (4.) His coming will indeed be *coming suddenly*, it will be a great *surprize* and *terror*, to those that are careless and asleep, it will come upon them as a thief in the night. (5.) It is therefore the indispensable duty of all Christ's disciples to *watch*, to be awake, and keep awake. *What I say unto you four*, ver. 3. *I say unto all* the twelve, or rather to *you twelve*, I say unto all my disciples and followers; what I say to you of this generation, I say to all that shall believe in me through your word in every age, *Watch, watch*, expect my second coming, prepare for it, that you may be found in peace, without spot, and blameless.

## C H A P. XIV.

*At this chapter begins the account which this evangelist gives of the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus, which we are all concerned to be acquainted, not only with the history of, but with the mystery of. Here is, (1.) The plot of the chief priests and scribes against Christ, ver. 1, 2. (2.) The anointing of Christ's head, at a supper in Bethany, two days before his death, ver. 3—9. (3.) The contract Judas made with the chief priests to betray him, ver. 10—11. (4.) Christ's eating the passover with his disciples, his instituting the Lord's supper, and his discourse with his disciples, at, and after, supper, ver. 12—31. (5.) Christ's agony in the garden, ver. 32—42. (6.) The betraying of him by Judas, and the apprehending of him by the chief priests agents, ver. 43—52. (7.) His arraignment before the high priest, his conviction, and the indignities done him at that bar, ver. 53—65. (8.) Peter's denying him, ver. 66—72. Most of which passages we had before, Matt. xxvi.*

1. **A**FTER two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. 2. But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar of the people. 3. ¶ And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman, having an alabaster-box of ointment of spikenard, very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. 4. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? 5. For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. 6. And Jesus said, Let her alone, why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. 7. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. 8. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. 9. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done, shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. 10. ¶ And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. 11. And when they heard *it*, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.



We have here instances,

First, Of the *kindness of Christ's friends*, and the provision made of respects and honours for him: And some friends he had, even in and about Jerusalem, that loved him, and never thought they could do enough for him, among whom, though Israel be not gathered, he is, and will be glorious.

1. Here was *one friend* that was so kind as to *invite him to sup with him*, and he was so kind as to accept the invitation, *ver. 3.* Though he had a prospect of his death approaching, yet he did not abandon himself to a melancholy retirement from all company, but conversed as freely with his friends as usual.

2. Here was *another friend*, that was so kind as to *anoint his head*, with very precious ointment, as he *sat at meat*. This was an extraordinary piece of respect paid him by a good woman, that thought nothing too good to bestow upon Christ, and to do him honour; now the scripture was fulfilled, *when the king sits at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof*, Cant. i. 12. Let us *anoint Christ* as our *beloved*, kiss him with a kiss of *affection*, and anoint him as our *sovereign*, kiss him with a kiss of *allegiance*. Did he pour out his soul unto death for us, and shall we think any box of ointment too precious to pour out upon him? And it is observable she took care to pour it all out upon Christ's head; she *brake the box*, so we read it, but because it was an *alabaster box*, not easily broken, nor was it necessary it should be broken, to get out the ointment, some read it, she *shook* the box, or *knocked it to the ground*, to loosen what was in it, that it might be got out the better; or she *rubbed*, and *scraped* out all that stuck to the sides of it. Christ must be honoured with *all we have*, and we must not think to keep back any part of the price. Do we give him the *precious ointment* of our best affections? let him have them *all*; love him *with all the heart*.

Now, 1. There were those that put a *worse construction* upon this than it *deserved*. They called it a *waste of the ointment*, *ver. 4.* Because they could not have found in their hearts to put themselves to such an expence for the honouring of Christ, they thought she was *prodigal* that did. Note, As the *vile person* ought not to be called *liberal*, nor the *churl* said to be *bountiful*, Isa. xxxii. 5. so the *liberal* and *bountiful* ought not to be called *wasteful*. They pretended it might have been *sold*, and *given to the poor*, *ver. 5.* But as a *common piety* to the *corban* will not excuse from a *particular charity* to a poor parent, *chap. vii. 11.* so a common charity to the poor, will not excuse from a particular act of piety to the Lord Jesus. What thy hand finds to do that is good, *do it with thy might*.

2. Our Lord Jesus put a *better construction* upon it, than for ought appears was *designed*. Probably she intended no more, but to shew the great honour she had for him before all the company, and to complete his entertainment. But Christ makes it to be an act of *great faith*, as well as *great love*, *ver. 8.* *she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying*, as if she foresaw that my resurrection would prevent her doing it afterwards. This funeral rite was a kind of presage of, or prelude to, his death approaching. See how Christ's heart was filled with the thoughts of his death, how every thing was construed with a reference to that, and how familiarly he spoke of it upon all occasions. It is usual for those who are *condemned to die*, to have their coffins prepared, and other provision made for their funerals, while they are yet alive; and so Christ accepted *this*. Christ's death and burial were the lowest steps of his humiliation, and therefore, though he cheerfully submitted to them, yet he would have some marks of honour to attend them, which might help to take off the *offence of the cross*, and be an intimation how *precious in the sight of the Lord, the death of his saints is*. Christ never rode in triumph into Jerusalem, but when he came thither to suffer, nor had ever his head anointed, but for *his burial*.

3. He recommended this piece of heroick piety to the applause of the church, in all ages. *Wherever this gospel shall be preached, it shall be spoken of for a memorial of her*, *ver. 9.* Note, The honour which attends well-doing, even in this world, is sufficient to balance the reproach and contempt that is cast upon it. *The memory of the just is blessed*, and they that had *trial of cruel mockings*, yet obtained a good report, Heb. xi. 36, 39. Thus was this good woman repaid for her box of ointment, *nec oleum perdidit nec operam*; she got by it that good name, which is *better than precious ointment*. Those that honour Christ, he will honour.

Secondly, Of the *malice of Christ's enemies*, and the preparation made by them to do him mischief.

1. The chief priests, his *open enemies*, consulted how they might *put him to death*, *ver. 1, 2.* The feast of the *passover* was now at hand, and at *that feast* he must be crucified. (1.) That his death and sufferings might be the more publick, and that all *Israel*, even those of the *dispersion*, who came from all parts to the feast, might be witnesses of it, and of the wonders that attended it. (2.) That the anti-type might answer the type. Christ, our *passover*, was sacrificed for us, and brought us out of the house of bondage, at the same time that the paschal lamb was sacrificed, and Israel's deliverance out of Egypt was *commemorated*.

Now see, (1.) How *spiteful* Christ's enemies were, they did not think it enough to banish or imprison him, for they aimed

not only to *silence* him, and *stop* his progress for the future, but to be revenged on him for all the good he had done. (2.) How *subtil* they were: *Not on the feast-day*, when the people are together, they do not say, lest they should be disturbed in their devotions, and diverted from them, but *lest there should be an uproar*, *ver. 2.* lest they should rise and rescue him, and *fall foul* upon those that *attempt* any thing against him. They who *desired* nothing more than the *praise* of men, dreaded nothing more than the rage and displeasure of men.

2. Judas, his *disguised enemy*, contracted with them for the betraying of him, *ver. 10, 11.* He is said to be *one of the twelve*, that were Christ's family, intimate with him, trained up for the service of his kingdom, and he *went to the chief priests*, to tender his service in this affair.

1. That which he proposed to them was, to *betray Christ* to them, and to give them notice when, and where they might find him, and seize him, without making an *uproar among the people*, which they were afraid of, if they should seize him when he appeared *in publick*, in the midst of his admirers. Did he know then what help it was they wanted, and where they were run a-ground in their councils? It is like he did not, for the debate was held in their close *cabal*; did they know that he had a mind to serve them, and make court to him? No, they could not imagine that any of his intimates should be so base; but Satan, who was entered into Judas, knew what occasion they had for him, and could guide him to be *guide to them*, who were contriving to *take Jesus*. Note, The spirit that works in all the children of disobedience, knows how to bring them in to the assistance one of another in a wicked project, and then to harden them in it, with the fancy that providence favours them.

2. That which he proposed to himself was, to *get money* by the bargain; he had what he aimed at, when *they promised to give him money*. Covetousness was Judas's master, *lust his own iniquity*, and that betrayed him to the sin of betraying his Master; the devil suited his temptation to *that*, and so conquered him; it is not said they promised him preferment, he was not *ambitious* of that, but they promised him *money*. See what need we have to double our guard against the sin that *most easily besets us*. Perhaps it was Judas's covetousness that brought him at first to *follow Christ*, having a promise that he should be cash-keeper or purser to the society, and he loved in his heart to be *fingering money*; and now there was money to be got on the other side, he was as ready to betray him, as ever he had been to follow him. Note, Where the principle of mens profession of religion is carnal and worldly, and the serving of a secular interest, the very same principle, whenever the wind turns, will be the bitter root of a vile and scandalous apostasy.

3. Having secured the money, he set himself to make good his bargain. He sought *how he might conveniently betray him*, how he might *seasonably deliver him up*, so as to answer the intention of those who had hired him. See what need we have to be careful that we do not ensnare ourselves in sinful engagements: If at any time we be so ensnared in the words of our mouths, we are concerned to deliver ourselves by a speedy retreat, *Prov. vi. 1—5.* It is a rule in our law, as well as in our religion, that an *obligation* to do an *evil thing*, is *null and void*; it binds to repentance, not to performance. See how the way of sin is down-hill, when men are *in*, they must *on*; and what *wicked contrivances* many have in their sinful pursuits, to compass their designs *conveniently*; but such conveniences will prove mischiefs in the end.

12. ¶ And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare, that thou mayest eat the passover? 13. And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. 14. And whosoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 15. And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. 16. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. 17. And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. 18. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me, shall betray me. 19. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? 20. And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish. 21. The Son of man indeed goeth; as it is written of him: but wo to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed: good were it for that man if



if he had never been born. 22. ¶ And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. 23. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. 24. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. 25. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. 26. ¶ And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. 27. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. 28. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. 29. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. 30. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this day, *even* in this night before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. 31. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

In these verses we have,

First, Christ's eating the passover with his disciples the night before he died, with the joys and comforts of which ordinance he prepared himself for his approaching sorrows; the full prospect of which did not indispose him for that solemnity. Note, No apprehension of trouble, come or coming, should put us by, or put us out of frame for our attendance on holy ordinances, as we have opportunity for it.

1. Christ eat the passover at the *usual time*, when the other Jews did, as Dr. Whitby has fully made out, and not as Dr. Hammond would have it the night before. It was on the first day of that feast, which (taking in all the eight days of the feast) was called *The feast of unleavened bread*, even that day when they killed the passover, ver. 12.

2. He directed his disciples how to find the place where he intended to eat the passover; and hereby gave such another proof of his infallible knowledge of things distant and future, which to us seem altogether *contingent*, as he had given when he sent them for the ass on which he rode in triumph, chap. xi. 6. *Go into the city* (for the passover must be eaten in Jerusalem) *and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water*, a servant sent for water to clean the rooms in his master's house, *follow him, go in where he goes*, enquire for his master, *the good man of the house*, ver. 14. and desire him to show you a room; no doubt the inhabitants of Jerusalem had rooms fitted up to be let out for this occasion, to those that came out of the country to keep the passover, and one of those Christ made use of; not any friend's house, nor any house he had formerly frequented, for then he would have said go to such a friend, or you know where we used to be, go thither and prepare: probably he went where he was not known, that he might be *undisturbed* with his disciples. Perhaps he notified it by a *sign* to conceal it from Judas, that he might not know till he came to the place; and by *such a sign* to intimate that he will dwell in the *clean heart*, that is *washed* as with *pure water*. Where he designs to come, a pitcher of water must go before him, see *Isa. i. 16, 17, 18*.

3. He eat the passover in an *upper room furnished*, ἐσρωμένον, *laid with carpets*, so Dr. Hammond; it would seem to have been a very handsome *dining room*; Christ was far from affecting any thing that looked stately in eating his common meals; on the contrary, he chose that which was homely, sat down on the grass; but when he was to keep a sacred feast, in honour of that he would be at the expence of as good a room as he could get. God looks not at *outward pomp*, but he looks at the tokens and expressions of *inward reverence* for a divine institution, which it is to be feared those want, who to save charges deny themselves decencies in the worship of God.

4. He eat it *with the twelve*, who were his family, to teach those who have the charge of families, not only families of *children*, but families of *servants*, or families of *scholars* or *pupils*, to keep up religion among them, and worship God with them. If Christ came *with the twelve*, then Judas was with them, though he was at this time contriving to betray his Master, and it is plain by what follows, ver. 20. that he was there: he did not absent himself, lest he should have been suspected; had his *seat* been empty at this feast, they would have said as Saul of David, *He is not clean, surely he is not clean*, 1 Sam. xx. 26. Hypocrites though they know it is at their peril, yet crowd into special ordinances to keep up their reputation, and palliate their secret wickedness. Christ did not exclude him from the feast, though he *knew* his wickedness, for it was not as yet become publick and scandalous; Christ designing to put the *keys of the kingdom of heaven* into the hands of men, who can but judge according to outward appearance; he would hereby both direct and encourage them in their

admissions to this table to be satisfied with a justifiable profession, because they cannot discern the *root of bitterness* till it *springs up*.

Secondly, Christ's discourse with his disciples as they were eating the passover. It is likely they had discourse, according to the custom of the feast, of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the preservation of the first-born, and were as pleasant as they used to be together on this occasion, till Christ told them that which would mix *trembling* with their joys.

1. They were *pleasing* themselves with the society of their Master; but he tells them they must now presently lose him; *The Son of man is betrayed*, and they knew, for he had often told them, what followed; if he be *betrayed*, the next news you will hear of him is, that he is *crucified* and *slain*; God hath determined it concerning him, and he agrees to it, *The Son of man goes, as it is written of him*, ver. 21. It was written in the counsels of God, and written in the prophecies of the Old Testament, not one jot or tittle of either of which can fall to the ground.

2. They were *pleasing* themselves with the society one of another, but Christ casts a damp upon the joy of that by telling them, *One of you that eateth with me shall betray me*, ver. 18. Christ said this, if it might be, to startle the conscience of Judas, and to awaken him to repent of his wickedness, and to draw back (for it was not yet too late) from the brink of the pit. But for ought appears, he who was *most concerned* in the warning, was *least concerned* at it. All the rest were affected with it.

(1.) They began to be *sorrowful*. As the remembrance of our former falls into sin, so the fear of the like again doth oftentimes much embitter the comfort of our spiritual feasts, and damp our joy. Here were the *bitter herbs*, with which this *passover feast* was taken. (2.) They began to be *suspicious* of themselves; they said one by one, *Is it I?* and another said, *Is it I?* They are to be commended for their *charity*, that they were more jealous of themselves, than of one another. It is the law of charity to *hope the best*, 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 7. because we assuredly *know*, therefore we may justly *suspect* more evil by ourselves, than by our brethren. They are also to be commended for their acquiescence in what Christ said; they trusted more to his words than to their own hearts; and therefore do not say, I am sure it is not I, but Lord, is it I: see if there be such a *way of wickedness* in us, such a *root of bitterness*, and discover it to us, that we may pluck up that *root*, and stop up that *way*.

Now in answer to their enquiry Christ saith that, (1.) Which would make them easy; it is not you, nor you; it is this that now *dips with me in the dish*, the adversary and enemy is this wicked Judas. (2.) Which one would think should make Judas very uneasy. If he go on in his undertaking, it is upon the sword's point, for *wo to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed*; he is undone, for ever undone; his sin will soon find him out; and it were better for him he had never been born, had never had a being than such a miserable one as he must have. It is very probable, Judas encouraged himself in it with this thought, that his Master had often said he must be betrayed, and if it must be done, surely God will not find fault with him that doth it, for who has resisted his will? as that objector argues, Rom. ix. 19. But Christ tells him this will be no shelter or excuse to him; *The Son of man indeed goes, as it is written of him*, as a lamb to the slaughter, but *wo to that man by whom he is betrayed*. God's decrees to permit the sins of men, and bring glory to himself out of them, do neither necessitate their sins, nor determine to them, nor will they be any *excuse* of the sin or mitigation of the punishment. Christ was delivered indeed by the *determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God*; but notwithstanding that, it is *with wicked hands* that he is crucified and slain, Acts ii. 23.

Thirdly, The institution of the Lord's supper.

1. It was instituted in the close of a supper, when they were sufficiently fed with the *paschal lamb*, to shew that in the Lord's supper there is no *bodily repast* intended; to preface it with such a thing, is to revive Moses again. But it is food for the soul only, and therefore a very little of that which is for the body, as much as will serve for a *sign*, is enough. It was at the close of the *passover supper* which by this was evangelized, and then superseded and set aside. Much of the doctrine and duty of the eucharist is illustrated to us by the law of the passover, *Exod. xii.* for the Old Testament institutions, though they do not bind us, yet *instruct* us, by the help of a gospel key to them. And these two ordinances lying here so near together, it may be good to compare them, and observe how much shorter and plainer the institution of the Lord's supper is, than that of the passover was: Christ's yoke is easy in comparison with that of the ceremonial law, and his ordinances more *spiritual*.

2. It was instituted by the *example* of Christ himself; not with the ceremony and solemnity of a law, as the ordinance of baptism was after Christ's resurrection, *Mat. xxviii. 19.* with, *Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid*, by a power given to Christ in heaven and on earth, ver. 18. but by the practice of our Master himself, because intended for those who are already his disciples, and taken into covenant with him: but it has the obligation of a law, and was intended to remain in full force, power, and virtue, till his second coming.



3. It was instituted with  *blessing and giving of thanks* ; the gifts of common providence are to be so received, 1-Tim. iv. 4, 5. much more the gifts of special grace. He  *blessed*, ver. 22. and  *gave thanks*, ver. 23. At his other meals he was wont to  *bless and give thanks*, Mark vi. 41.—viii. 7. So remarkably that he was known by it,  *Luke xxiv. 30, 31*. And he did the same at this meal.

4. It was instituted to be a  *memorial of his death* ; and therefore he  *brake* the bread, to shew how it pleased the Lord to  *bruise him* : and he called the  *wine* which is the blood of the grape, the  *blood of the New Testament*. The death Christ died was a  *bloody death*, and frequent mention is made of the  *blood*, the  *precious blood*, as the price of our redemption ; for the blood is  *the life*, and made  *atonement for the soul*, Lev. xvii. 11, 14. The pouring out of the blood was the most sensible indication of the  *pouring out of his soul*, Isa. liii. 12. Blood has a  *voice*, Gen. iv. 10. and therefore the blood is so often mentioned because it was to  *speak*, Heb. xii. 24. It is called the  *blood of the New Testament*, for the covenant of grace became a  *testament*, and of force by the death of Christ the testator, Heb. ix. 16. It is said to be  *shed for many*, to justify  *many*, Isa. liii. 12. to bring many sons to glory, Heb. ii. 10. It was sufficient for  *many* being of infinite value ; it has been of use to  *many* ; we read of a great multitude which no man could number, that had all  *washed their robes*, and  *made them white in the blood of the Lamb*, Rev. vii. 9, 14. And still it is a  *fountain opened*. How comfortable is this to poor repenting sinners, that the blood of Christ is  *shed for many*, and if for  *many*, why not for  *me* ? If for sinners, sinners of the Gentiles, the chief of sinners, then  *why not for me* ?

5. It was instituted to be a  *ratification of the covenant* made with us in him, and a sign of the conveyance of those benefits to us, which were purchased for us by his death : and therefore he broke the bread  *to them*, ver. 22. and said,  *take, eat of it* ; he gave the cup  *to them*, and ordered them to  *drink of it*, ver. 23. Apply the doctrine of Christ crucified to yourselves, and let it be  *meat and drink* to your souls, strengthening, and nourishing, and refreshing to you, and the support and comfort of your spiritual life.

6. It was instituted with an eye to the happiness of heaven, and to be an earnest and fore-taste of that, and thereby to put our mouths out of taste to all the pleasures and delights of sense, ver. 25.  *I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine*, as it is a bodily refreshment : I have done with it,  *no one having tasted spiritual delights*, straightway desires sensitive ones, for he saith, the  *spiritual* is better,  *Luke v. 39*. But every one that hath tasted  *spiritual delights*, straightway desires  *eternal ones*, for he saith those are  *better still* ; and therefore let me  *drink no more of the fruit of the vine*, it is dead and flat to those that have been made to  *drink of the river of God's pleasures* ; but, Lord, hasten the day, when I shall  *drink it new and fresh in the kingdom of God*, where it shall be for ever new, and in perfection.

7. It was closed with a  *hymn*, ver. 26. Though Christ was in the midst of his enemies, yet he did not for fear of them balk this sweet duty of singing psalms. Paul and Silas sung, when the  *prisoners heard them*. This was an  *evangelical song*, and gospel times are often spoken of in the Old Testament, as times of rejoicing and praise expressed by  *singing*. This was Christ's  *swan-like song*, which he sung just before he entered upon his agony ; probably that which was usually sung,  *Psal. cxiv. to Psal. cxix*.

Fourthly, Christ's discourse with his disciples as they were returning to Bethany, by moon-light. When they had  *sung the hymn*, presently they  *went out*. It was now pretty near bed-time, but our Lord Jesus had his heart so much upon his suffering, that he would not  *come into the tabernacle of his house*, nor  *go up into his bed*, nor  *give sleep to his eyes*, when that work was to be done,  *Psal. cxxxii. 3, 4*. The Israelites were forbidden to go out of their houses that night that they eat the passover, for fear of the sword of the destroying angel,  *Exod. xii. 22, 23*. But because Christ the  *great shepherd* was to be  *smitten*, he  *went out* purposely to expose himself to the sword as a champion ; they  *evaded* the destroyer, but Christ  *conquered* him, and brought  *destructions to a perpetual end*.

1. Christ here foretels, that in his sufferings he should be  *deserted* by all his disciples.  *You will all be offended, because of me this night*. I know you will, ver. 27. and what I tell you now, is no other but what the scripture has told you before,  *I will smite the shepherd*, and then  *the sheep will be scattered*. Christ knew this before, and yet welcomed them at his table ; he foresees the falls and miscarriages of his disciples, and yet doth not refuse them. Nor should we be discouraged from coming to the Lord's supper, by the fear of relapsing into sin afterward ; but the greater our danger is, the more need we have to fortify ourselves by the diligent conscientious use of holy ordinances. Christ tells them, they would be  *offended in him*, would begin to question, whether he were the Messiah or no, when they saw him  *over-powered* by his enemies. Hitherto they had  *continued with him in his temptations*, tho' they had sometimes offended him, yet they had not been  *offended in him*, nor turned the back upon him : but now the storm would be so great, that they would

all  *slip their anchors*, and be in danger of  *shipwrack*. Some trials are more particular, as  *Rev. ii. 10*.  *The devil shall cast some of you into prison*, but others are more general, an  *hour of temptation*, which shall come upon all the world,  *Rev. iii. 10*. The  *smiting of the shepherd*, is often the  *scattering of the sheep* : magistrates, ministers, masters of families, if these are, as they should be,  *shepherds* to those under their charge, when any thing comes amiss to them, the whole flock suffers for it, and is endangered by it.

But Christ encourages them with a promise that they shall rally again, shall return both to their duty, and to their comfort ; ver. 28.  *After I am risen, I will gather you in from all the places whither you are scattered*, Ezek. xxxiv. 12. And will  *go before you into Galilee*, will see our friends, and enjoy one another there.

2. He foretels, that he should be  *denied* particularly by Peter. When they  *went out* to go to the mount of Olives, we may suppose they dropped Judas, he stole away from them, whereupon the rest began to think  *highly* of themselves, that they  *stuck* to their Master when Judas quitted him. But Christ tells them, that though they should be kept by his grace from Judas's apostasy, yet they would have no reason to boast of their constancy. Note, Though God keep us from being as bad as the worst, yet we may well be ashamed to think that we are not better than we are.

1. Peter is confident, that he should not  *do so ill* as the rest of the disciples, ver. 29.  *Though all should be offended*, all his brethren here present,  *yet will not I*. He supposeth himself not only stronger than others, but so much stronger as to be able to receive the shock of a temptation, and bear up against it,  *all alone* ; to  *stand*, though no body stood  *by him* ; it is bred in the bone with us to  *think well* of ourselves, and  *trust* to our own hearts.

2. Christ tells him, he will  *do worse* than any of them. They will all  *desert* him, but he will  *deny* him ; not once, but  *thrice* ; and that presently ;  *this day, even this night before the cock-crow twice*, thou wilt  *deny* that ever thou hadst any knowledge of me, or acquaintance with me, as one ashamed and afraid to own me.

3. He stands to his promise ;  *If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee*. I will stick to thee, though it cost me my life, and, no doubt, he thought as he said. Judas said nothing like this, when Christ told him he would betray him. He sinned by contrivance. Peter by surprise ; he  *devised the wickedness*, Mic. ii. 1. Peter was  *overtaken in this fault*, Gal. vi. 1. It was ill done of Peter to contradict his Master, if he had said with fear and trembling, Lord, give me grace to keep me from denying thee, lead me not into this temptation, deliver me from this evil, it might have been prevented : but they were all thus confident ; they who said,  *Lord, is it I* ? Now said,  *It shall never be I*. Being acquitted from their fear of betraying Christ, they were now secure. But he that thinks he stands, must learn to take heed lest he fall ; and he that  *girdeth on the harness*, not boast as though he had put it off.

32. And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane : and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here while I shall pray. 33. And he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, 34. And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death : tarry ye here, and watch. 35. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed, that if it were possible the hour might pass from him. 36. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee, take away this cup from me : nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt. 37. And he cometh and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou ? couldst not thou watch one hour ? 38. Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation : the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. 39. And again he went away and prayed, and spake the same words. 40. And when he returned, he found them asleep again (for their eyes were heavy) neither wist they what to answer him. 41. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest : it is enough, the hour is come ; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42. Arise up, let us go ; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

Christ is here entering upon his sufferings, and begins with those, which were the forest of all his sufferings, in his soul. Here we have him in his agony ; this melancholy story we had in Matthew ; this agony in soul was the  *wormwood and the gall* in the  *affliction and misery* ; and thereby it appeared no sorrow was forced upon him, but it was what he freely admitted.



1. He retired for prayer. *Sit ye here* (saith he to his disciples) while I go a little further, and pray. He had lately prayed with them, John xvii. and now he appoints them to withdraw, while he goes to his Father, upon an errand peculiar to himself. Note, Our praying with our families, will not excuse our neglect of secret worship. When Jacob entered into his agony, he first sent over all that he had, and was left alone, and then there wrestled a man with him, Gen. xxxii. 23, 24. though he had been at prayer before, ver. 9. it is likely with his family.

2. Even into that retirement, he took with him Peter, and James, and John, ver. 33. three competent witnesses of this part of his humiliation, and though great spirits care not how few know any thing of their agonies, he was not ashamed they should see. These three had bragged most of their ability and willingness to suffer with him; Peter here, in this chapter, and James, and John, chap. x. 39. and therefore Christ takes them to stand by, and see what a struggle he had with the bloody baptism, and the bitter cup, to convince them they knew not what they said. It is fit, that they who are most confident should be first tried, that they may be made sensible of their folly and weakness.

3. There he was in a mighty toils, ver. 33. *He began to be sore amazed*, ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι, a word not used in Matthew, but very significant; it speaks something like that horror of great darkness, which fell upon Abraham, Gen. xv. 12. or rather, something much worse, and more frightful. The terrors of God set themselves in array against him, and he allowed himself the actual and intent contemplation of them. Never was sorrow like unto his at that time; never any had such experience, as he had had from eternity of divine favours, and therefore never any had, or could have, such a sense as he had of divine favours. Yet there was not the least disorder or irregularity in this commotion of his spirits; his affections rose not tumultuously, but under direction, and as they were called up, for he had no corrupt nature to mix with them, as we have. If water have a sediment at the bottom, though it may be pretty clear while it stands still, yet shake it, and it goes muddy, so it is with our affections; but pure water in a clean glass, though never so much stirred, continues clear, and so it was with Christ. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it very probable, that the devil did now appear to our Saviour in a visible shape, in his own shape and proper colour to terrify and affright him, and to drive him from his hope in God, (which he aimed at in persecuting Job, a type of Christ, to make him curse God and die) and to deter him from the further prosecution of his undertaking; and whatever hindered him from that, he looked upon as coming from Satan, Matt. xvi. 23. When the devil had tempted him in the wilderness, it is said he departed from him for a season, Luke iv. 3. intending another grapple with him, and in another way; finding that he could not by his flatteries allure him into sin, he would try by his terrors to affright him into it, and so make void his design.

4. He made a sad complaint of this toils he was in. He said, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful*. (1.) He was made sin for us, and therefore was thus sorrowful; he fully knew the malignity of the sins he was to suffer for; and having the highest degrees of love to God, who was offended by them, and of love to man, who was damaged and endangered by them, now those were set in order before him, no marvel, that his soul was exceeding sorrowful. Now he was made to serve with our sins, and was thus wearied with our iniquities. (2.) He was made a curse for us; the curses of the law were transferred to him, as our surety and representative, not as originally bound with us, but as bail to the action: And when his soul was thus exceeding sorrowful, he did as it were yield to them, and lie down under the load, until by his death he had satisfied for sin, and so for ever abolished the curse. He now tasted death, as he is said to do, Heb. ii. 9. which is not an extenuating expression, as if he did but taste it, no, he drunk up even the dregs of the cup; but it is rather aggravating, it did not go down by wholesale, but he tasted all the bitterness of it. This was that fear the apostle speaks of, Heb. v. 7. a natural fear of pain and death, which it is natural to human nature to startle at.

Now the consideration of Christ's sufferings in his soul, and his sorrows for us, should be of use to us,

(1.) To imbitter our sins: Can we ever think a favourable, or so much as a slight thought of sin, when we see what impression sin (though but imputed) made upon the Lord Jesus? Shall that sit light upon our souls, which sat so heavy upon his? Was Christ in such an agony for our sins, and shall we never be in an agony about them? How should we look upon him whom we have pressed, whom we have pierced, and mourn, and be in bitterness? It becomes us to be exceeding sorrowful for sin, because Christ was so, and never to make a mock at it. If Christ thus suffered for sin, let us arm ourselves with the same mind.

(2.) To sweeten our sorrows; if our souls be at any time exceeding sorrowful, through the afflictions of this present time, let us remember that our Master was so before us, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Why should we affect to drive away sorrow, when Christ for our sakes courted it, and submitted to it, and thereby not only took out the sting of it, and made it tolerable; but put virtue into it, and made it profitable, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better; nay, and

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put sweetness into it, and made it comfortable. Blessed Paul was sorrowful, and yet always rejoicing. If we be exceeding sorrowful, it is but unto death; that will be the period of all our sorrows if Christ be ours; when the eyes are closed, all tears are wiped away from them.

5. He ordered his disciples to stick to him, not because he needed their help, but because he would have them to look upon him, and receive instruction. He said to them, *tarry ye here and watch*. He had bid the other disciples only sit ye here, ver. 32. but these three he bids to tarry and watch, as expecting more from them than from the rest.

6. He addressed himself to God by prayer, ver. 35. He fell on the ground and prayed. It was but a little before this, that in prayer he lift up his eyes, John xvii. 1. but here being in an agony, he fell upon his face, accommodating himself to his present humiliation, and teaching us thus to abase ourselves before God; it becomes us to be low when we come into the presence of the most High. (1.) As man he deprecated his sufferings, that if it were possible the hour might pass from him, ver. 35. This short, but sharp affliction, that which I am now this hour to enter upon, let man's salvation be, if possible, accomplished without it. We have his very words, ver. 36. *Abba, Father*. The Syriac word is here retained which Christ used, and which signifies Father, to intimate what an emphasis our Lord Jesus, in his sorrows, laid upon it, and would have us to lay. It is with an eye to this, that St. Paul retains this word, putting it into the mouths of all that have the Spirit of adoption, they are taught to cry, *Abba, Father*, Rom. viii. 15. Gal. iv. 6. *Father, All things are possible to thee*. Note, Even that which we cannot expect should be done for us, we ought yet to believe God is able to do. And when we submit to his will, and refer ourselves to his wisdom and mercy, it must be with a believing acknowledgment of his power, that all things are possible to him. (2.) As mediator he acquiesced to the will of God concerning them; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt. I know the matter is settled, and cannot be altered, I must suffer and die, and I bid it welcome.

7. He roused his disciples, who were dropped asleep while he was at prayer, ver. 37, 38. He comes to look after them, since they did not look after him, and he findeth them asleep, so little affected were they with his sorrows, his complaints and prayers. This carelessness of theirs, was a presage of their further offence in deserting him; and it was an aggravation of it, that he had so lately commended them for continuing with him in his temptations, though they had not been without their faults; was he so willing to make the best of them, and were they so indifferent in approving themselves to him? They had lately promised not to be offended in him, what? and yet mind him so little? He particularly upbraided Peter with his drowsiness, *Simon, sleepest thou? καὶ σὺ τὸν νοῦν, What thou, my Son?* Thou that didst so positively promise thou wouldst not deny me, dost thou slight me thus? From thee I expected better things. *Couldst thou not watch one hour?* He did not require him to watch all night with him, only for one hour. It aggravates our faintness and short-spiritedness in Christ's service, that he doth not over-task us, nor weary us with it, Isa. xliii. 23. He puts upon us no other burthen, but to hold fast till he comes, Rev. ii. 24, 25. and behold he comes quickly, Rev. iii. 11.

As those whom Christ loves he rebukes when they do amiss, so those whom he rebukes he counsels and comforts. (1.) It was a very wise and faithful word of advice, which Christ here gave to his disciples; *watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation*, ver. 38. It was bad to sleep when Christ was in his agony, but they were entering into further temptation, and if they did not stir up themselves, and fetch in grace and strength from God by prayer, they would do worse; and so they did, when they all forsook him and fled. (2.) It was a very kind and tender excuse that Christ made for them, *the spirit truly is willing*, I know it is, it is ready, it is forward, you would willingly keep awake, but you cannot. This may be taken as a reason for that exhortation, *watch and pray*, because, though the spirit is willing, I grant it is, you have sincerely resolved never to be offended in me, but the flesh is weak, and if you do not watch and pray, and use the means of perseverance, you may be overcome notwithstanding. The consideration of the weakness and infirmity of our flesh, should engage and quicken us to prayer and watchfulness, when we are entering into temptation.

8. He repeated his address to his Father, ver. 39. He went again, and prayed. Saying τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον, the same word, or matter, or business; he spoke to the same purpose, and again the third time. This teacheth us, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint, Luke xviii. 1. Though the answers to our prayers do not come quickly, yet we must renew our requests, and continue instant in prayer; for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and not lie, Hab. ii. 3. Paul, when he was buffeted by a messenger of Satan besought the Lord thrice, as Christ did here, before he obtained an answer of peace, 2 Cor. xii. 8. A little before this, when Christ, in the trouble of his soul, prayed, *Father, glorify thy name*, he had an immediate answer by a voice from heaven, *I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again*; but now he must come a second, and a third time, for the visits of God's grace in answer to prayer,



come sooner or later, according to the pleasure of his will, that we may be kept depending.

9. He repeated his visits to his disciples. Thus he gave a specimen of his continued care for his church on earth, even when it is *half asleep*, and not duly concerned for itself, while he ever lives making intercession with his Father in heaven. See how, as became a mediator, he passeth and repasseth between both. He came the second time to his disciples, and found them asleep again, ver. 40. See how the infirmities of Christ's disciples return upon them, notwithstanding their resolutions, and over-power them notwithstanding their resistance; and what clogs those bodies of ours are to our souls, which should make us long for that blessed state, in which they shall be no more our encumbrance. This second time he spoke to them as before, but they wist not what to answer him; they were ashamed of their drowsiness, and had nothing to say in excuse for it. Or, they were so over-powered with it, that, like men between sleep and wake, they knew not where they were, or what they said. But the third time, they were bid to sleep if they could, ver. 41. Sleep on now, and take your rest. I have now no more occasion for your watching, you may sleep if you will for me. It is enough; we had not that word in Matthew. You have had warning enough to keep awake, and would not take it, and now you should see what little reason you have to be secure: Ἀπένε, I discharge you from any further attendance; so some understand it; now the hour is come in which I knew you would all forsake me, and even take your course, as he said to Judas, What thou dost, do quickly. The Son of man is now betrayed into the hands of sinners, the chief priests and elders, those worst of sinners; because they made a profession of sanctity. Come, Rise up, do not lie dozing there. Let us go and meet the enemy, for Lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand, and I must not now think of making an escape; when we see trouble at the door, we are concerned to stir up ourselves to get ready for it.

43. ¶ And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders. 44. And he that betrayed him, had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. 45. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him. 46. ¶ And they laid their hands on him, and took him. 47. And one of them that stood by, drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. 48. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves, to take me? 49. I was daily with you in the temple, teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. 50. And they all forsook him and fled. 51. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him. 52. And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

We have here the seizing of our Lord Jesus by the officers of the chief priests. This was what his enemies had long aimed at, they had often sent to take him, but he had escaped out of their hands, because his hour was not come; nor could they now have taken him, had he not freely surrendered himself. He began first to suffer in his soul, but afterwards suffered in his body, that he might satisfy for sin which begins in the heart, but afterwards makes the members of the body instruments of unrighteousness.

1. Here is a parcel of rude miscreants employed to take our Lord Jesus, and make him a prisoner; a great multitude with swords and staves. There is no wickedness so black, no villainy so horrid, but there may be found among the children of men fitting tools to be used in it, that will not boggle at it, so miserably depraved and vitiated is mankind. At the head of this rabble is Judas, one of the twelve, one of those that had been many years intimately conversant with our Lord Jesus, had prophesied in his name, and in his name cast out devils, and yet betrayed him. It is no new thing for a very fair and plausible profession to end in a shameful and fatal apostasy. How art thou fallen, O Lucifer!

2. Men of no less figure than the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, sent them, and set them on work, who pretended to expect the Messiah, and to be ready to welcome him, and yet when he is come, and has given undeniable proofs, that it is he that should come, yet because he doth not make court to them, nor countenance and support their pomp and grandeur, because he appears not as a temporal prince, but sets up a spiritual kingdom, and preacheth repentance, reformation, and a holy life, and directs mens thoughts, and affections, and aims to another world, they set themselves against him, and without giving the

credentials he produceth an impartial examination, resolve to bring him down.

3. Judas betrayed him with a kiss; abusing the freedom Christ used to allow his disciples, of kissing his cheek at their return when they had been any time absent. He called him, Master, and kissed him. Rabbi, Rabbi, as if he had been more respectful to him than ever. It is enough to put one ever out of conceit with being called of men Rabbi, Rabbi (Matt. xxiii. 7.) when it was with this compliment that Christ was betrayed. He bid them take him, and lead him away safely. Some think he spoke this ironically, knowing that they could not secure him, unless he pleased, this Sampson could break the bonds asunder, as threads of tow, and make his escape, and that he should get the money, and Christ the honour, and no harm done; and I should think so too, but that Satan was entered in him, so that the worst and most malicious intention of this action is not too black to be supposed. Nay, he had often heard Christ's Master say, that being betrayed he should be crucified, and had no reason to think otherwise.

4. They arrested him and made him their prisoner, ver. 46. They laid their hands on him, rude and violent hands, and took him into custody; triumphing, it is likely, that they had done that which had been often before attempted in vain.

5. Peter laid about him in defence of his Master, and wounded one of the assailants, being for the present mindful of his promise to venture his life with his Master. He was one of them that stood by, of them that were with him, so the word signifies, of the three disciples that were with him in the garden; he drew sword, and aimed, it is likely, to cut off the head, but missed his blow, and only cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest, ver. 47. It is easier to fight for Christ, than to die for him; but Christ's good soldiers overcome not by taking away other people's lives, but by laying down their own, Rev. xii. 11.

6. Christ argues with them that had seized him, and sheweth them the absurdity of their proceedings against them. (1.) That they came out against him, as against a thief, whereas he was innocent of any crime; he taught daily in the temple, and if he had any wicked design, there it would, some time or other have been discovered; nay, these officers of the chief priests, being retainers to the temple, may be supposed to have heard his sermons there, (I was with you in the temple) and had he not taught them an excellent doctrine, even his enemies themselves being judges? were not all the words of his mouth in righteousness? Was there any thing froward or perverse in them, Prov. viii. 8. By his fruits he was known to be a good tree; why then did they come out against him as a thief? (2.) That they came to take him thus privately, whereas he was neither ashamed, nor afraid, to appear publicly in the temple. He was none of those evil-doers that hate the light, neither come to the light, John iii. 20. If their masters had any thing to say to him, they might meet him any day in the temple, where he was ready to answer all challenges, all charges: And there they might do as they pleased with him, for the priests had the custody of the temple, and the command of the guards about it; but to come upon him thus at midnight, and in the place of his retirement, was base, and cowardly. This was to do as David's enemy, that sat in the lurking places of the villages to murder the innocent, Psalm x. 8. But this was not all, (3.) They came with swords and staves, as if he had been in arms against the government, and must have the posse comitatus raised to reduce him. There was no occasion for those weapons, but they made this ado, (1.) To secure themselves from the rage of some; they came armed, because they feared the people; but thus were they in great fear, where no fear was, Psalm liii. 5. (2.) To expose him to the rage of others. By coming with swords and staves to take him, they represented him to the people (who are apt to take impressions this way) as a dangerous, turbulent man, and so endeavoured to incense them against him, and make them cry out, Crucify him, crucify him, having no other way to gain their point.

7. He reconciled himself to all this injurious, ignominious treatment, by referring himself to the Old Testament predictions of the Messiah. I am hardly used, but I submit, for the scriptures must be fulfilled, ver. 49. (1.) See here what a regard Christ had to the scriptures; he would bear any thing, rather than the least jot or tittle of the word of God should fall to the ground, and as he had an eye to them in his sufferings, so he has in his glory; for what is Christ doing in the government of the world but fulfilling the scriptures. (2.) See what use we are to make of the Old Testament, we must search for Christ, the true treasure hid in that field; as the history of the New Testament expounds the prophecies of the Old, so the prophecies of the Old Testament illustrate the history of the New.

8. All Christ's disciples hereupon deserted him, ver. 50. they all forsook him and fled. They were very confident they should stick to him, but even good men know not what they will do till they are tried. If it was such a comfort to him, as he had lately intimated that they had hitherto continued with him in his lesser trials, Luke xxii. 28. we may well imagine what a grief was to him, that they deserted him now in the greatest, where they might have done him some service, when he was abused, protect him; and when accused, to witness for him. Let n



those that suffer for Christ, think it strange if they be thus deserted, and if all the herd shun the wounded deer; they are not better than their Master, nor can expect to be better used either by their enemies, or by their friends. When St. Paul was in peril none stood by him, but all men forsook him, 2 Tim. iv. 16.

9. The noise disturbed the neighbourhood, and some of the neighbours were brought into danger, by the riot, *ver. 51, 52.* This passage of story, we have not in any other of the evangelists. Here is an account of a *certain young man*, that, as it should seem, was no disciple of Christ, nor, as some have imagined, a servant of the house wherein Christ had eaten the passover, who followed him to see what would become of him, as the sons of the prophets, when they understood that Elijah was to be taken up, went to view afar off, 2 Kings ii. 7. but some young man that lived near the garden, perhaps in the house to which the garden belonged. Now observe concerning him,

1. How he was frightened out of his bed, to be a spectator of Christ's sufferings. Such a multitude so armed, and coming with so much fury, and in the dead of the night, and in a quiet village, could not but make a mighty hubbub, this alarmed our young man, who perhaps thought there was some tumult or rising in the city, some uproar among the people, and had the curiosity to go and see what the matter was; and was in such haste to inform himself, that he could not stay to dress himself, but threw a sheet about him, as if he would appear like a walking ghost, in grave clothes to frighten those who had frightened him, and run in among the thickest of them with this question, *What is to do here?* And being told, had a mind to see the issue, having no doubt heard much of the fame of this Jesus, and therefore when all his disciples had quitted him, he continued to follow him, desirous to hear what he would say, and see what he would do. Some think, his having no other garment but this linen cloth upon his naked body, intimates, that he was one of those Jews who made a greater profession of piety than their neighbours; and in token of that, among other instances of austerity and mortification of the body, they used no clothes but one linen garment, which though contrived to be modest enough, was thin and cold. But I rather think, this was not his constant wear.

2. See how he was frightened into his bed again, when he was in danger of being made a sharer in Christ's sufferings. His own disciples had out-run him; but this young-man having no concern for him, thought he might securely attend him, especially being so far from being armed that he was not so much as clothed; but the young men, the Roman soldiers, who were called to assist, laid hold of him, for all was fish that came to their net. Perhaps they were now vexed at themselves, that they had suffered the disciples to run away, and they being got out of their reach they resolved to seize the first they could lay their hands on; though this young man was perhaps one of the strictest sect of the Jewish church, yet the Roman soldiers made no conscience of abusing him upon this occasion. Finding himself in danger he left the linen cloth by which they had caught hold of him, and fled away naked. This passage is recorded to shew what a barbarous crew this was that was sent to seize Christ, and what a narrow escape the disciples had of falling into their hands, out of which nothing could have kept them but their Master's care of them, *If ye seek me, let these go their way*, Joh. xviii. 8. It also intimates that there is no hold of those who are led by curiosity only, and not by faith and conscience to follow Christ.

53. ¶ And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests, and the elders, and the scribes. 54. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. 55. And the chief priests, and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. 56. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. 57. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, 58. We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. 59. But neither so did their witness agree together. 60. And the high priest stood up in the mids, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 61. But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62. And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 63. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and said, What need we any further witnesses? 64. Ye have heard the blasphemy:

what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. 65. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

We have here Christ's arraignment, trial, conviction, and condemnation, in the ecclesiastical court before the great Sanhedrin, of which the high priest was president, or judge of the court; the same Caiaphas that had lately adjudged it expedient he should be put to death, guilty, or not guilty, John xi. 50. and therefore might justly be excepted against as partial.

1. Christ has hurried away to his house, his palace it is called, such state did he live in. And there, though in the dead of the night, all the chief priests, and elders, and scribes that were in the secret, were assembled ready to receive the prey; so sure were they of it.

2. Peter followed at a distance, such a degree of cowardise was his late courage dwindled into, *ver. 54.* But when he came to the chief priest's palace, he sneakingly went and sat with the servants, that he might not be suspected to belong to Christ. The high priest's fire-side was no proper place, nor his servants proper company, for Peter, but it was his entrance into a temptation.

3. Great diligence was used to procure for love or money false witnesses against Christ. They had seized him as a malefactor, and now they had him they had no indictment to prefer against him, no crime to lay to his charge, but they sought for witnesses against him; pumped some with ensnaring questions, offered bribes to others if they would accuse him, and endeavoured to frighten others if they would not, *ver. 55, 56.* The chief priests and elders were by the law intrusted with the prosecuting and punishing of false witnesses, Deut. xix. 16. yet those were now ring-leaders in a crime that tends to the overthrow of all justice. It is time to cry help, Lord, when the physicians of a land are its troublers, and those that should be the conservators of peace and equity, are the corrupters of both.

4. He was at length charged with words spoken some years ago, which as they were represented seemed to threaten the temple which they had made no better than an idol of, *ver. 57, 58.* but the witnesses to this matter did not agree, *ver. 59.* for one swore that he said, *I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days*, so it is in Matthew, the other swore that he said, *I will destroy this temple, that is made with hands, and within three days, I will build not it, but another made without hands*; now these two differ much from each other. *ἐδὲ ἰσὼν ἡν ἡ μαρτυρία.* Their testimony was not sufficient, not equal to the charge of a capital crime; so Dr. Hammond; they did not accuse him of that upon which a sentence of death might be founded, no not by the utmost stretch of their law.

5. He was urged to be his own accuser, *ver. 60.* The high priest stood up in a heat, and said *answerest thou nothing?* This he said under pretence of justice and fair dealing, but really with a design to ensnare him, that they might accuse him, Luk. xi. 53. 54. — xx. 20. We may well imagine with what an air of haughtiness and disdain this proud high priest brought our Lord Jesus to this question: Come you, the prisoner at the bar, you hear what is sworn against you, what have you now to say for your self? pleased to think that he seemed silent who had so often silenced those that picked quarrels with him. Still Christ answered nothing, that he might set us an example, (1.) Of patience under calumnies, and false accusations; when we are reviled, let us not revile again, 1 Pet. ii. 22. And (2.) Of prudence; when a man shall be made an offender for a word, Isa. xxix. 21. and our defence made our offence, it is an evil time indeed when the prudent shall keep silence, (lest they make ill worse) and commit their cause to him that judgeth righteously.

But, 6. When he was asked whether he was the Christ, he confessed, and denied not, that he was, *ver. 61, 62.* He asked, *art thou the Son of the Blessed?* (i. e.) The Son of God, for as Dr Hammond observes, the Jews when they named God, generally added, *blest for ever*, and thence the blessed is the title of God, a peculiar title, and applied to Christ, Rom. ix. 5. And for the proof of his being the Son of God he binds them over to his second coming, *ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power*; that Son of man that now appears so mean and despicable, whom you see and trample upon; Isa. liii. 2, 3. you shall shortly see and tremble before. Now one would think such a word as this which our Lord Jesus seems to have spoken with a grandeur and majesty not agreeable to his present appearance (for through the thickest cloud of his humiliation some rays of glory were still darted forth) should have startled the court, and at least in the opinion of some of them should have amounted to a demurrer, or arrest of judgment, and that they should have stayed process till they had considered further of it; when Paul at the bar reasoned of the judgment to come, the judge trembled and adjourned the trial, Acts xxiv. 25. But these chief priests were so miserably blinded with malice and rage, that like the horse rushing into the battle, they mocked at fear, and were not affrighted, neither believed they that it was the sound of the trumpet, Job xxxix. 22, 23. and see Job xv. 25, 26.



7. The high priest upon this confession of his, convicted him, as a blasphemer, ver. 63. He rent his clothes, *χιτώνας ἀντὶς*, some think the word signifies his pontifical vestments, which for the greater state he had put on, though in the night, upon this occasion. As before in his enmity to Christ, he said he knew not what, *Joh. xi. 51, 52.* so now he did he knew not what. If Saul's rending Samuel's mantle was made to signify the rending of the kingdom from him, *1 Sam. xv. 27, 28.* much more did Caiaphas's rending his own clothes signify the rending of the priesthood from him, as the rending of the vail at Christ's death signified the throwing of all open. Christ's clothes even when he was crucified were kept entire, and not rent; for when the Levitical priesthood was rent in pieces, and done away, *This man, because he continues ever, has an unchangeable priesthood.*

1. They agreed he was a blasphemer, and as such was guilty of a capital crime, ver. 64. The question seemed to be put fairly, *what think ye?* But it was really prejudged, for the high priest had said, *ye have heard the blasphemy;* he gave judgment first, who as president of the court ought to have voted last. So they all condemned him to be guilty of death; what friends he had in the great Sanhedrin did not appear, it is likely they had not notice.

9. They set themselves to abuse him, and, as the Philistines with Sampson, to make sport with him, ver. 65. It should seem, some of the priests themselves that had condemned him, so far forgot the dignity as well as duty of their place, and the gravity which became them, that they helped their servants in playing the fool with a condemned prisoner. This they made their diversion, while they waited for the morning to complete their villainy. That night of observations (as the passover night was called) they made a merry night of. If they did not think it below them to abuse Christ, shall we think any thing below us by which we may do him honour?

66. ¶ And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest. 67. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. 68. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch: and the cock crew. 69. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. 70. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. 71. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. 72. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

We have here the story of Peter's denying Christ.

1. It began in keeping at a distance from him. Peter had followed afar off, ver. 54. and now was beneath in the palace, at the lower end of the hall. Those that are shy of Christ, are in a fair way to deny him, that are shy of attending on holy ordinances, shy of the communion of the faithful, and loth to be seen on the side of despised godliness.

2. It was occasioned by his associating with the high priest's servants, and sitting among them. They that think it dangerous to be in company with Christ's disciples, because thence they may be drawn in to suffer for him, will find it much more dangerous to be in company with his enemies, because there they may be drawn into sin against him.

3. The temptation was his being charged as a disciple of Christ; *Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth,* ver. 67. This is one of them, ver. 69, for thou art a Galilean, one may know that by thy speaking broad, ver. 70. It doth not appear that he was challenged upon it, or in danger of being prosecuted as a criminal for it, but only bantered upon it, and in danger of being ridiculed as a fool for it. While the chief priests were abusing the Master, the servants were abusing the disciples. Sometimes the cause of Christ seems to fall so much on the losing side, that every body has a stone to throw at it, and even the abjects gather themselves together against it. When Job was on the dunghill, he was had in derision of those that were the children of base man, *Job xxx.*

8. Yet all things considered, the temptation could not be called formidable; it was only a maid that casually cast her eye upon him, and for ought appears without design of giving him any trouble, said *Thou art one of them,* to which he needed not to have made any reply, or might have said, and if I be I hope that is no treason.

4. The sin was very great; he denied Christ before men, at a time when he ought to have confessed and owned him, and to have

appeared in court a witness for him. Christ had often given notice to his disciples of his own sufferings, yet when they came they were to Peter as great a surprize and terror as if he had never heard of them before. He had often told them that they must suffer for him, must take up their cross and follow him, and yet Peter is so terribly afraid of suffering upon the very first alarm of it, that he will lye and swear and do any thing to avoid it. When Christ was admired and flocked after, he could readily own him, but now he is deserted, and despised, and run down, he is ashamed of him, and will own no relation to him.

5. His repentance was very speedy. He repeated his denial thrice, and the third was worst of all, for then he cursed and swore to confirm his denial; and that third blow which one would think should have stunned him, and knocked him down, startled him and roused him up. Then the cock crew the second time, which put him in mind of his Master's words, the warning he had given him with that particular circumstance of the cock crowing twice, and by recollecting that he was made sensible of his sin and the aggravations of it; and when he thought thereon he wept. Some observe that this evangelist who wrote, as some have thought by St. Peter's direction, speaks as fully of Peter's sin as any of them but more briefly of his sorrow, which Peter in modesty would not have to be magnified, and because he thought he could never sorrow enough for so great a sin. His repentance here is thus expressed, *ἐπιβαλὼν ἑκλάσει*, where something must be supplied. He added to weep, so some, making it a Hebraism; he wept, and the more he thought of it, the more he wept: he continued weeping: he flung out and wept: burst out into tears: threw himself down and wept: He covered his face and wept, so some: cast his garment about his head that he might not be seen to weep. He cast his eyes upon his Master, who turned and looked upon him, so Dr. Hammond supplies it, and it is a probable conjecture. Or, as we understand it, fixing his mind upon it he wept. It is not a transient thought of that which is humbling that will suffice, but we must dwell upon it: Or, what if this word should mean his laying load upon himself, throwing confusion into his own face; he did as the publican that smote his breast in sorrow for sin; and this amounts to his weeping bitterly.

## C H A P. XV.

What we read of the sufferings of Christ in the foregoing chapter was but the prologue or introduction, here we have the completing of them. We left him condemned by the chief priests, but they could only shew their teeth, they could not bite. Here we have him, (1.) Arraigned and accused before Pilate the Roman governor, ver. 1—5. (2.) Cried out against by the common people at the instigation of the priests, ver. 6—14. (3.) Condemned to be crucified immediately, ver. 15. (4.) Bantered and abused as a mock-king by the Roman soldiers, ver. 16—19. (5.) Led out to the place of execution, with all possible ignominy and disgrace, ver. 20—24. (6.) Nailed to the cross between two thieves, ver. 25—28. (7.) Reviled and abused by all that that passed by, ver. 29—32. (8.) Forsaken for a time by his Father, ver. 33—36. (9.) Dying and rending the vail, ver. 37, 38. (10.) Attested and witnessed to, by the centurion, and others, ver. 39—41. (11.) Buried in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, ver. 42—47.

1. AND straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. 2. And Pilate asked him, Art thou the king of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. 3. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. 4. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. 5. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. 6. Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. 7. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8. And the multitude crying aloud, began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. 9. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the king of the Jews? 10. (For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.) 11. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should



should rather release Barabbas unto them. 12. And Pilate answered, and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do *unto him* whom ye call the king of the Jews? 13. And they cried out again, Crucify him. 14. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

Here we have,

1. A consultation held by the great Sanhedrin, for the effectual prosecution of our Lord Jesus. They met *early in the morning* about it, and went into a grand committee, to find out *ways and means* to get him put to death; they lost no time, but followed their blow in good earnest, lest there should be an *uproar among the people*. The unwearied industry of wicked people in doing that which is evil, should shame us for our backwardness and slothfulness in that which is good. They that war against Christ and thy soul are up early, *How long then wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?*

2. The delivering of him up a prisoner to Pilate; they *bound him*. He was to be the great sacrifice, and sacrifices must be bound with cords, *Psal. cxviii. 27.* Christ was bound to make bonds easy to us, and to enable us as Paul and Silas to sing in bonds. It is good for us often to *remember the bonds* of the Lord Jesus, as bound with him, who was *bound for us*. They led him through the streets of Jerusalem, to expose him to contempt, who, whilst he taught in the temple but a day or two before, was had in *veneration*; and we may well imagine how miserably he looked, after such a night's usage as he had had; so buffeted, spit upon, and abused. Their delivering him to the Roman power was a type of the ruin of their church, which hereby they merited and brought upon themselves; it signified that the promise, and the covenant, and the oracles of God, and the visible church-state, which were the glory of Israel, and had been so long in their possession, should now be delivered up to the Gentiles. By delivering up *the king* they do in effect deliver up the *kingdom of God*, which is therefore, as it were by their own consent, taken from them and given to another nation. If they had delivered up Christ, to gratify the desires of the Romans, or to satisfy any jealousies of theirs concerning him, it had been another matter, but they voluntarily betrayed him that was *Israel's crown*, to them that were *Israel's yoke*.

3. The examining of him by Pilate upon interrogatories, *ver. 2.* *Art thou king of the Jews?* Dost thou pretend to be so, to be that Messiah whom the Jews expect as a temporal prince? Yea, saith Christ, it is as *thou sayest*, I am that Messiah, but not such a one as they expect. He is the king that rules and protects his Israel, according to the Spirit, that are Jews inwardly by the circumcision of the spirit, and the King that will restrain and punish the carnal Jews, that continue in unbelief.

4. The articles of impeachment exhibited against him, and his silence under the charge and accusation. The chief priests forgot the dignity of their place, when they turned informers, and did in *person accuse Christ of many things*, *ver. 3.* and witness against him, *ver. 4.* Many of the Old Testament prophets charge the priests of their times with great wickedness, in which *well did they prophesy* of these priests, see *Ezek. xxii. 26. Hos. v. 1.—vi. 9. Mic. iii. 11. Zeph. iii. 4. Mal. i. 6.—ii. 8.* The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, is said to be for the *iniquity of the priests, that shed the blood of the just*, *Lam. iv. 13.* Note, wicked priests are generally the worst of men. The better any thing is, the worse it is when it is corrupted. Lay-persecutors have been generally found more compassionate than ecclesiasticks. These priests were very eager and noisy in their accusation; but Christ *answered nothing*, *ver. 3.* when Pilate urged him to clear himself, and was desirous he should, *ver. 4.* yet still he stood mute, *ver. 5.* he *answered nothing*, which Pilate thought very strange: He gave Pilate a direct answer, *ver. 2.* but would not answer the prosecutors and witnesses, because the things they alledged were notoriously false, and he knew Pilate himself was convinced they were so. Note, As Christ spoke to admiration, so he kept silence to admiration.

5. The proposal Pilate made to the people, to have Jesus released to them, since it was the custom of the feast, to grace the solemnity with the release of one prisoner. The people expected, and demanded, that he should do *as he had ever done to them*, *ver. 8.* it was an ill usage, but they would have it kept up. Now Pilate perceived that the chief priests delivered up Jesus *for envy*; because he had got such a reputation among the people, as eclipsed theirs; *ver. 10.* it was easy to say, comparing the eagerness of the persecutors, with the slenderness of the proofs, that it was not his *guilt*, but his *goodness*, not any thing *mischievous*, or *scandalous*, but something *meritorious* and *glorious*, that they were provoked at. And therefore hearing how much he was the darling of the crowd, he thought he might safely appeal from the priests to the people, and that they would be proud  
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of rescuing him out of the priests hands; and he proposeth an expedient for their doing it without danger of an *uproar*; let them demand him to be *released*, and Pilate will readily do it, and stop the mouths of the priests with it, that the people insisted upon his release. There was indeed another prisoner, one Barabbas, that had an interest, and would have some votes, but he questioned not but Jesus would out-poll him.

6. The unanimous, outrageous clamours of the people, to have *Christ put to death*, and particularly to have him *crucified*. It was a great surprize to Pilate, when he found the people so much under the influence of the priests, that they all agreed to desire that Barabbas might be *released*, *ver. 11.* Pilate opposed it all he could, *What will ye that I shall do to him, whom ye call the king of the Jews?* would not you then have him released too? *ver. 12.* No, say they, *crucify him*; the priests having put that in their mouths, they insist upon it; when Pilate objected, *Why, what evil has he done?* A very material question in such a case, they do not pretend to answer it, but *cried out the more exceedingly*, as they were more and more instigated and irritated by the priests, *Crucify him, crucify him*. Now the priests, who were very busy dispersing themselves, and their creatures among the mob, to keep up the cry, promised themselves that it would influence Pilate two ways to condemn him. (1.) It might incline him to believe Christ *guilty*, when there was so general an out-cry against him; surely, might Pilate think, he must needs be an ill man whom all the world is weary of; he would now conclude he had been *misinformed*, when he was told what an interest he had in the people, and that the matter was not so. But the priests had hurried on the prosecution with so much expedition, that we may suppose they that were Christ's friends, and would have opposed this cry, were at the other end of the town, and knew nothing of the matter. Note, It has been the common artifice of Satan, to put Christ and his religion into an ill name, and so to run them down. When once this sect, as they called it, comes to be *every where spoken against*, though *without cause*, then that is looked upon as *cause enough* to condemn it. But let us judge of persons and things by their merits, and the standard of God's word, and not prejudice by common fame, and cry of the country. (2.) It might induce him to condemn Christ, to *please* the people, and indeed for *fear of displeasing* them. Though he was not so *weak* as to be governed by their opinion to believe him guilty, yet he was so *wicked*, as to be swayed by their out-rage, to condemn him, though he believed him innocent; induced thereunto by reasons of state, and the wisdom of this world. Our Lord Jesus dying as a *sacrifice* for the *sins of many*, he fell a sacrifice to the *rage of many*.

15. ¶ And so Pilate willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. 16. And the soldiers led him away into the hall called Pretorium; and they call together the whole band. 17. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, 18. And began to salute him, Hail king of the Jews. 19. And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing *their* knees, worshipped him. 20. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. 21. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

Here, 1. Pilate, to gratify the Jews malice, delivers Christ to be *crucified*; *ver. 15.* *willing to content the people*, to do enough for them, so the word is, and make them easy, that he might keep them quiet, *released Barabbas unto them*, that was the scandal and plague of their nation, and *delivered Jesus to be crucified*, who was the glory and blessing of their nation. Though he *had scourged him* before, hoping that would *content* them, and then not designing to crucify him, yet he went on to that; for he that could persuade himself to *chastise* one that was innocent, (*Luke xxiii. 16.*) no wonder he could, by degrees, persuade himself to *crucify* him.

Christ was *crucified*, for that was, (1.) A *bloody* death, and *without blood no remission*, *Heb. ix. 22.* The blood is *the life*, *Gen. ix. 4.* it is the *vehicle* of the *animal* spirits, which *connect* the soul and body, so that the exhausting of the blood, is the exhausting of the life. Christ was to lay down *his life* for us, and therefore *shed his blood*. Blood made *atonement for the soul*, *Lev. xvii. 11.* and therefore in every sacrifice of propitiation, special order was given for the *pouring out* of the blood, and the *sprinkling* of that before the Lord. Now, that Christ might answer all these types, he *shed his blood*. (2.) It was a *painful* death; the pains were exquisite and acute, for death made its assaults upon the vitals, by the exterior parts which are *quickest of sense*. Christ died,



died, so as that he might *feel himself die*, because he was to be both the priest and the sacrifice; so as that he might be *active* in dying, because he was to *make his soul an offering* for sin. Tully calls crucifixion, *Teterrimum supplicium*; Christ would meet death in its greatest terror, and so conquer it. (3.) It was a *shameful* death, the death of slaves, and the vilest malefactors; so it was accounted among the Romans. The *cross* and the *shame* are put together; God having been injured in his honour by the sin of man, it is *in his honour* that Christ makes him *satisfaction*, not only by denying himself in, and divesting himself of, the honours due to his divine nature, for a time, but by submitting to the greatest reproach and ignominy, the human nature was capable of being loaded with. Yet this was not the worst. (4.) It was a *curse* death; thus it was branded by the Jewish law, *Deut. xxi. 23. He that is hanged, is accursed of God*, is under a particular mark of God's displeasure. It was the death that Saul's sons were put to, when the guilt of their father's bloody house was to be expiated, *2 Sam. xxi. 6. Haman and his sons were hanged, Esth. vii. 10.—ix. 13.* We do not read of any of the prophets of the Old Testament, that were *hanged*; but now Christ has submitted to be *hanged upon a tree*, the reproach and curse of that kind of death is quite rolled away, so that it ought not to be any hindrance to the comfort of those, who die either innocently or penitently, nor any diminution from, but rather an addition to, the glory of those who die martyrs for Christ, to be, as he was, *hanged upon a tree*.

2. Pilate, to gratify the gay humour of his Roman soldiers, delivered him to them to be abused, and spitefully treated, while they were preparing for the execution. They called together *the whole regiment* that was then in waiting, and they went in to an inner hall, where they ignominiously abused our Lord Jesus, as a king, just as in the high priest's hall, his servants had ignominiously abused him as a prophet and Saviour. (1.) Do kings use to wear robes of purple or scarlet? They *clothed him with purple*. This abuse done to Christ in his apparel, should be an intimation to Christians, not to make the putting on of apparel *their adorning*, *1 Pet. iii. 4.* Shall a purple or scarlet robe be matter of pride to a Christian, which was matter of reproach and shame to Christ? (2.) Do kings wear crowns? They *platted a crown of thorns*, and *put it on his head*. A crown of straw or rushes would have been banter enough, but this was pain also. He wore the crown of thorns which we had deserved, that we might wear the crown of glory which he merited. Let us be *taught* by these *thorns*, as Gideon taught the men of Succoth, to hate sin, and be uneasy under it, and to be in love with Jesus Christ, who is here a lily among thorns. If we be at any time afflicted with a *thorn in the flesh*, let it be our comfort, that our great high Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having himself known what *thorns in the flesh* meant. (3.) Are kings attended with the acclamations of their subjects, O king, live for ever? That also is mimicked, they saluted him with *Hail king of the Jews*, such a prince, and such a people, even good enough for one another. (4.) Kings use to have *sceptres* put into their hand, marks of dominion, as the crown is of dignity, and to resemble that, they put a *reed in his right hand*. Those who despise the authority of the Lord Jesus, as not to be observed and obeyed, that regard not either the precepts of his word, or the threatnings of his wrath, do, in effect, *put a reed in his hand*; nay, and as these here *smite him on the head* with it, such is the indignity they do him. (5.) Subjects, when they swear allegiance, were wont to *kiss* their sovereign, and this they offered to do, but, instead of that, *spit upon him*. (6.) Kings used to be addressed to upon the *knee*, and this also they brought into the jest, they *bowed the knee and worshipped him*; this they did in scorn, to make themselves and one another laugh. We were by sin become liable to *everlasting shame and contempt*, to deliver us from which, our Lord Jesus submitted to this shame and contempt for us. He was thus mocked, not in *his own clothes*, but in another's, to signify that he suffered not for his own sin; the crime was ours, the shame his. Those who pretend subjection to Christ, but at the same time give themselves up to the service of the world and the flesh, do, in effect, the same that they did, who bowed the knee to him in mockery, and abused him with, *Hail, king of the Jews*, when they said, *We have no king but Cesar*. Those that bow the knee to Christ, but do not bow the soul, that *draw nigh to him with their mouths*, and *honour him with their lips*, but *their hearts are far from him*, put the same affront upon him, that these here did.

3. The soldiers, at the hour appointed, led him away from Pilate's judgment-hall, to the place of execution, *ver. 20.* as a sheep to the slaughter; he was *led forth with the workers of iniquity*, though he did no sin. But lest his death, under the load of his cross, which he was to carry, should prevent the further cruelties they intended, they compelled one Simon of Cyrene to carry his cross for him. He *passed by, coming out of the country or out of the fields*, not thinking of any such matter. Note, We must not think it strange, if crosses come upon us suddenly, and we be surprized by them. The cross was a very troublesome unweildy load, but he that carried it a few minutes, had the ho-

nour to have his name upon record in the book of God, though otherwise an obscure person: so that wherever this gospel is preached, there shall this be told for a memorial of him; so though no *affliction*, no cross, *for the present be joyous, but grievous*, yet afterwards it yields a crown of glory, to them that are exercised thereby.

22. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a scull. 23. And they gave him to drink, wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not. 24. And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. 25. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. 26. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 27. And with him they crucified two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. 28. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbred with the transgressors. 29. And they that passed by, railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, 30. Save thyself, and come down from the cross. 31. Likewise also the chief priests mocking, said among themselves, with the scribes, He saved others, himself he cannot save. 32. Let Christ the king of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see, and believe. And they that were crucified with him, reviled him.

We have here the *crucifixion* of our Lord Jesus.

1. The *place* where he was crucified, it was called Golgotha, the *place of a scull*. Some think, because of the heads of malefactors that were there cut off; it was the common place of execution, as Tyburn, for he was, in all respects, numbered with the transgressors. I know not how to give any credit to it, but divers of the antients mention it as a current tradition, that in this place our first father Adam was buried, and they think it highly congruous, that there Christ should be crucified; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, and Epiphanius, (great names) take notice of it; nay, Cyprian adds, *creditur à piis*, many good people believe that the blood of Christ crucified, did trickle down upon the scull of Adam, who was buried in the same place. Something more credible is the tradition, that this mount Calvary, was *that mountain in the land of Moriah*, (and in the land of Moriah it is certain it was, for so the country about Jerusalem was called) on which Isaac was to be offered, and the ram was offered instead of him, and then Abraham had an eye to *this day of Christ*, when he called the place Jehovah-jireh, the *Lord will provide*, expecting that so it would be seen in the *mount of the Lord*.

2. The *time* when he was crucified; it was the *third hour*, *ver. 25.* He was brought before Pilate, about the sixth hour, (*John xix. 14.*) according to the Roman way of reckoning, which John useth, with which ours at this day agrees, that is at six a clock in the morning; and then, at the *third hour*, according to the Jews way of reckoning, that is, about nine of the clock in the morning, or soon after, they nailed him to the cross. Dr. Lightfoot thinks, the *third hour* is here mentioned, to intimate an aggravation of the wickedness of the priests, that they were here prosecuting Christ to the death, though it was after the *third hour*, when they ought to have been attending the service of the temple, and offering the peace-offerings, it being the first day of the *feast of unleavened bread*, when there was to be a *holy convocation*. At that very time, when they should have been, according to the duty of their place, presiding in the public devotions, were they here venting their malice against the Lord Jesus; yet, these were the men that seemed so zealous for the temple, and condemned Christ for speaking against it; Note, there are many who pretend to be *for the church*, who yet care not how seldom they go to church.

3. The indignities that were done him, when he was nailed to the cross; as if that had not been ignominious enough, they added several things to the ignominy of it.

1. It being the custom to give *wine* to persons that were to be *put to death*, they mingled his with *myrrh*, which was *bitter*, and made it *nauseous*; he *tasted* it, but would not drink it; was willing to admit the bitterness of it, but not the benefit of it.

2. The garments of those that were crucified, being, as with us, the executioner's fee, the soldiers *cast lots* upon his garments, *ver.*



ver. 24. threw dice (as our soldiers use to do upon a drum-head) for them. So making themselves merry with his misery, and letting at their sport, while he was hanging in pain.

3. They set a superscription over his head, by which they intended to reproach him, but really did him both justice and honour, *The king of the Jews*, ver. 26. Here was no crime alleged; but his sovereignty owned. Perhaps Pilate meant to cast disgrace upon Christ, as a baffled king, or upon the Jews, who, by their importunity, had forced him against his conscience to condemn Christ, as a people that deserved no better a king than he seemed to be, however God intended it to be, the proclaiming even of Christ upon the cross, the *king of Israel*; though Pilate knew not what he wrote, no more than Caiaphas what he said, *John xi. 51.* Christ crucified, is King of his church, his spiritual Israel; and even then when he hung on the cross he was like a king, *conquering* his and his peoples enemies, and *triumphing* over them, *Col. ii. 15.* Now he was writing his laws in his own blood, and preparing his favours for his subjects. Whenever we look unto Christ crucified, we must remember the inscription over his head, that he is a king, and we must give up ourselves to be his subjects, as Israelites indeed.

4. They crucified *two thieves* with him, one on his right hand, the other on his left, and he in the midst, as the worst of the three, ver. 27. so great a degree of dishonour did they hereby intend him. And no doubt it gave him *disturbance* too: some that have been imprisoned in the common goals for the testimony of Jesus, have complained of the company of cursing, swearing prisoners, more than of any other of the grievances of their prison: now in the midst of such our Lord Jesus was *crucified*: while he lived he had, as there was occasion, *associated* with sinners to do them good, and now when he died, he was for the same purpose joined with them, for he *came into the world*, and went out of it to *save sinners*, even the chief. But this evangelist takes particular notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures in it, ver. 28. In that famous prediction of Christ's sufferings, *Isa. liii. 12.* it was foretold that he should be numbered with the *transgressors*, because he was made *sin for us*.

5. The spectators, that is, the generality of them, instead of condoling his misery, added to it by insulting over him. Surely never was such an instance of barbarous inhumanity towards the vilest malefactor: but thus the devil shewed the utmost rage against him, and thus he submitted to the greatest dishonours that could be done him.

1. Even they that *passed by*, that were no way concerned, yet *railed on him*, ver. 29. If their hearts were so hardened that their compassions were not moved with such a spectacle, yet they should have thought it enough to have their curiosity gratified, but that will not serve, as if they were not only divested of all humanity, but were devils in human shape; they taunted him, and expressed themselves with the utmost detestation of him, and indignation at him, and shot thick at him arrows, even *bitter words*. The chief priests, no doubt, put these sarcasms into their mouths, *Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, now, if thou canst, save thy self, and come down from the cross.* They triumph as if now they had got him to the cross, there were no danger of his *destroying the temple*, whereas the temple of which he spoke he was now *destroying*, and did within *three days* build it up: and the temple of which they spake, he did by men, that were his sword, and his hand, destroy not many years after. When secure sinners think the danger is over, it is then most ready to seize them: the day of the Lord comes as a thief upon those that deny his coming, and say, Where is the promise of it? much more upon those that defy his coming, and say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work.

2. Even the chief priests, who being taken from among men, and ordained for men, should have compassion even on those that are out of the way, should be tender of those that are suffering and dying, *Heb. v. 1, 2.* yet they poured vinegar instead of oil into his wounds, they talked to the grief of him whom God had smitten, *Psal. lxix. 26.* they mocked him, they said he saved others, healed and helped them, but now it appears it was not by his own power, for *himself he cannot save*. They challenge him to come down from the cross if he could, ver. 32. let them but see that, and they would believe; whereas they would not believe, when he gave them a more convincing sign than that, when he came up from the grave. These chief priests, one would think, might now have found themselves other work to do: if they would not go to do their duty in the temple, yet they might have been employed in an office not foreign to their profession; though they would not offer any counsel or comfort to the Lord Jesus, yet they might have given some help to the thieves in their dying moments; (the monks and priests in Popish countries are very officious about criminals broken upon the wheel, a death much like that of the cross) but they did not think that their business.

3. Even they that were crucified with him reviled him, ver. 32. one of them did, so wretchedly was his heart hardened even in the depth of misery, and at the door of eternity.

33. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land, until the ninth hour. 34. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 35. And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias. 36. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. 37. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. 38. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom. 39. ¶ And when the centurion which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. 40. There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; 41. Who also when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him; and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

Here we have an account of Christ's dying, how his enemies abused him, and God honoured him at his death.

1. There was a thick darkness over the whole land, (some think over the whole earth) for three hours, from noon, till three of the clock. Now the scripture was fulfilled, *Amos viii. 9. I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and will darken the earth in the clear day, and Jer. xv. 9. Her sun is gone down while it was yet day.* The Jews had often demanded of Christ a sign from heaven, and now they had one, but such a one as signified the blinding of their eyes. It was a sign of the darkness that was come and coming upon the Jewish church and nation. They were doing their utmost to extinguish the Sun of righteousness which was now setting, and the rising again of which they would never own; and what then might be expected among them but a worse than Egyptian darkness. This intimated to them, that the things which belonged to their peace, were now hid from their eyes, and that the day of the Lord was at hand, which should be to them a day of darkness and gloominess, *Joel ii. 1, 2.* It was the power of darkness they were now under, the works of darkness they were now doing, and such as this should their doom justly be who loved darkness rather than light.

2. Towards the close of this darkness, our Lord Jesus in the agony of his soul cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* ver. 34. The darkness signified the present cloud which the human soul of Christ was under, when he was making it an offering for sin. Mr. Fox in his *Acts and Monuments*, Vol. iii. p. 160. tells of one Mr. Hunter, a martyr in queen Mary's time, that being fastened to the stake to be burnt, he put up this short prayer, *Son of God, shine upon me*; and immediately the sun in the firmament shone out of a dark cloud so full in his face that he was forced to look another way, which was very comfortable to him: but our Lord Jesus, on the contrary, was denied the light of the sun when he was in his sufferings, to signify the withdrawing of the light of God's countenance. And this he complained of more than any thing; he did not complain of his disciples forsaking him, but of his Father's, (1.) Because this wounded his spirit; and that is a thing hard to bear, *Prov. xviii. 14.* this brought the waters into his soul, *Psal. lxix. 1, 2, 3.* (2.) Because in this especially he was made sin for us; our iniquities had deserved indignation and wrath upon the soul, *Rom. ii. 7.* and therefore Christ being made a sacrifice, underwent as much of it as he was capable of; and it could not but bear hard indeed upon him who had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was always his delight. These symptoms of divine wrath, which Christ was under in his sufferings, were like that fire from heaven which had been sent sometimes in extraordinary cases to consume the sacrifices, as *Lev. ix. 24. 2 Chron. vii. 1. 1 Kings xviii. 38.* and it was always a token of God's acceptance; the fire that should have fallen upon the sinner, if God had not been pacified, fell upon the sacrifice as a token that he was so; therefore it now fell upon Christ, and extorted from him this loud and bitter cry. When Paul was to be offered as a sacrifice for the service of saints, he could joy and rejoice, *Phil. ii. 17.* But it is another thing to be offered as a sacrifice for the sins of sinners. Now at the sixth hour, and so to the ninth, the sun was darkened by an extraordinary eclipse; and if it be true as some Astronomers compute, that in the evening of this day on which Christ died, there was an eclipse of the moon



moon that was natural and expected, in which seven digits of the moon were darkened, and it continued from five a-clock till seven; it is remarkable, and yet farther significant of the darkness of the time that then was. When the sun shall be darkened, the moon also shall not give her light.

3. Christ's prayer was bantered by them that stood by, ver. 35, 36. because he cried, Eli, Eli, or (as Mark has it according to the Syriac dialect) Eloi, Eloi, they said *he calls for Elias*, though they knew very well what he said, and what it signified, *my God, my God*. Thus did they represent him as *praying to saints*, either because he had abandoned God, or God had abandoned him; and hereby they would make him more and more odious to the people: one of them filled a sponge with vinegar, and reached it up to him upon a reed, let him cool his mouth with that, it was drink good enough for him, ver. 36. this was intended for a further affront and abuse to him; and whoever it was that checked him who did it, did but add to the reproach; let him alone, he has called for Elias, let us see whether Elias will come to take him down, and if not we may conclude that he also hath abandoned him.

4. Christ did again cry with a loud voice, and so gave up the ghost, ver. 37. He was now commending his soul into his Father's hands, and though God is not moved with any bodily exercise, yet this loud voice signified that great strength and ardency of affection wherewith he did it, to teach us in every thing wherein we have to do with God, to put forth our utmost vigour, and to perform all the duties of religion, particularly that of self-resignation with our whole heart and our whole soul; and then though speech fails, that we cannot cry with a loud voice as Christ did, yet if God be the strength of the heart, that will not fail. Christ was really and truly dead, for he gave up the ghost, his human soul departed to the world of spirits, and left his body a breathless clod of clay.

5. Just at that instant that Christ died upon mount Calvary, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom, ver. 38. This spoke a great deal, (1.) Of terror to the unbelieving Jews, for it was a presage of the utter destruction of their church and nation, which followed not long after, it was like the cutting asunder the staff of beauty, (for this veil was exceeding splendid and glorious, Exod. xxvi. 31.) and that was done, at the same time when they gave for his price thirty pieces of silver, Zech. xi. 10, 12. to break the covenant which he had made with that people. Now it was time to cry *Ichabod*, The glory is departed from Israel. Some think that story which Josephus relates of the temple door opening of its own accord with that voice, let us depart hence, some years before the destruction of Jerusalem, is the same with this here, but that is not probable; however this had the same signification, according to that, Hos. v. 14. I will tear and go away. (2.) It speaks a deal of comfort to all believing Christians, for it signified the consecrating and laying open to us a new and living way into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

6. The centurion who commanded that detachment which had the oversight of the execution, was convinced and confessed that this Jesus was the Son of God, ver. 39. One thing that satisfied him was, that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost: that one who was ready to give up the ghost, should be able to cry out so was very surprizing. Of all the sad spectacles of this kind he never observed the like; and that one who had strength to cry so loud, should yet immediately give up the ghost; this also made him wonder, and he said to the honour of Christ, and the shame of those that abused him, Truly this man was the Son of God. But what reason had he to say so? I answer, (1.) He had reason to say that he suffered unjustly, and had a great deal of wrong done him. Note, He suffered for saying, he was the Son of God; and it was true he did say so, so that if he suffered unjustly, as it was plain by all the circumstances of his sufferings he did, then what he said was true, and he was indeed the Son of God. (2.) He had reason to say that he was a favourite of heaven, and one for whom the Almighty Power was particularly engaged, seeing how heaven did him honour at his death, and frowned upon his persecutors. Surely thinks he, this must be some divine person, highly beloved of God. This he expresseth by such words as speak his eternal generation, as God, and his special designation to the office of Mediator, though he meant not so. Our Lord Jesus, even in the depth of his sufferings and humiliation, was the Son of God, and was declared to be so with power.

7. There were some of his friends, the good women especially, that attended him, ver. 40, 41. There were women looking on afar off: the men durst not be seen at all, the mob was so very outrageous (*currenti cede furori*, they thought was good counsel now). The women durst not come near, but stood at a distance, overwhelmed with grief: some of these women are here named, Mary Magdalen was one, she had been his patient, and owned all her comfort to his power and goodness, which rescued her out

of the possession of seven devils, in gratitude for which she thought she could never do enough for him. Mary the mother of James the little, (*Jacobus parvus*) so the word is, probably he was so called because he was like Zaccheus, little of stature. This Mary was the wife of Cleophas or Alphius, sister to the virgin Mary. These women had followed Christ from Galilee, though they were not required to attend the feast as the males were; but it is likely they came in expectation that his temporal kingdom would now shortly be set up, and big with hopes of preferment for themselves and their relations under him: it is plain the mother of Zebedee's children was so, Matt. xx. 21. and now to see him upon a cross whom they thought to have seen upon a throne, could not but be a great balm to them. Note, Those that follow Christ in expectation of great things in this world by him, and by the profession of his religion, may probably live to see themselves sadly disappointed.

42. ¶ And now when the even was come (because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath) 43. Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. 44. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. 45. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. 46. And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. 47. And Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Joseph, beheld where he was laid.

We are here attending the funeral of our Lord Jesus, a solemn, mournful funeral, O that we may by grace be planted in the likeness of it. Observe,

1. How the body of Christ was begged. It was as the dead bodies of malefactors use to be, at the dispose of the government, Those that hurried him to the cross, designed he should make his grave with the wicked, but God designed he should make it with the rich, Isa. liii. 9. and so he did. We are here told,

1. When the body of Christ was begged, in order to its being buried, and why such haste was made with the funeral; the even was come, and it was the preparation, that is, The day before the sabbath, ver. 42. The Jews were more strict in the observation of the sabbath, than of any other feast; and therefore, though this day was it self a feast-day, yet they observed it more religiously as the eve of the sabbath; when they prepared their houses and tables, for the splendid and joyful solemnizing of the sabbath-day. Note, The day before the sabbath should be a day of preparation for the sabbath, not of our houses and tables, but of our hearts, which as much as possible should be freed from the cares and business of the world, and fixed, and put in frame for the service and enjoyment of God. Such work is to be done, and such advantages gained on the sabbath-day, that it is requisite we should get ready for it a day before; nay, the whole week should be divided between the improvement of the foregoing sabbath, and the preparation for the following sabbath.

2. Who it was that begged the body, and took care for the decent interment of it; it was Joseph of Arimathea, who is here called an honourable counsellor, ver. 43. A person of character and distinction, and in an office of publick trust; some think in the state, and that he was one of Pilate's privy council; his post rather seems to have been in the church, he was one of the great Sanhedrin of the Jews; or one of the high priest's council. He was εὐσχήμων βουλευτής, a counsellor that carried himself in his place, as did become him. Those are truly honourable, and those only in places of power and trust, that make conscience of their duty, and whose deportment is agreeable to their preferment. But here is a more shining character put upon him, he was one that waited for the kingdom of God, the kingdom of grace on earth, and of glory in heaven; the kingdom of the Messiah. Note, Those who wait for the kingdom of God, and hope for an interest in the privileges of it, must shew it by their forwardness to own Christ's cause and interest, even then when it seems to be crushed and run down. Observe, Even among the honourable counsellors, there were some, there was one at least that waited for the kingdom of God, whose faith will condemn the unbelief of all the rest. This man God raised up for this necessary service, when none of Christ's disciples could or durst undertake it, having neither purse nor interest, nor courage for it. Joseph went in boldly to Pilate; though he knew how much it would affront the chief priests, who had loaded him with so much reproach, to see any honour done him, yet he put on courage; perhaps at first he was a little afraid, but τολμήσας, taking heart on it, he determined



determined to shew this respect to the remains of the Lord Jesus, let the worst come to the worst.

3. What a surprize it was to Pilate to hear that he was *dead*, perhaps expecting that he would have saved himself, and come down from the cross; especially that he was *already dead*, that one who, seemed to have a more than ordinary vigour, should so soon yield to death. Every circumstance of Christ's dying was marvellous, for from first to last his name was called *wonderful*. Pilate doubted (so some understand it) whether he were yet dead or no, fearing lest he should be imposed upon, and the body should be *taken down alive*, and recovered, whereas the sentence was, as with us, to hang *till the body be dead*. He therefore called the centurion, his own officer, and asked him, *Whether he had been any while dead*, ver. 44. whether it was so long since they perceived any sign of life in him, any breath or motion, that they might conclude he was dead past recall. The centurion could assure him of this, for he had particularly observed how he *gave up the ghost*, ver. 39. There was a special providence in it, that Pilate should be so strict in examining this, that there might be no pretence to say he was buried alive, and so to take away the truth of his resurrection; and so fully was this determined, that that objection was never started. Thus the truth of Christ gains confirmation, sometimes even from the enemies of it.

2. How the body of Christ was *buried*. Pilate gave Joseph leave to take down the body, and do what he pleased with it. It was a wonder the chief priests were not too quick for him, and had not first begged the body of Pilate, to expose it, and drag it about the streets, but that remainder of their wrath did God restrain, and gave that invaluable prize to Joseph, who knew how to value it; and the hearts of the priests were so influenced, that they did not oppose it. *Sit divus modo non sit vivus*.

1. Joseph bought *fine linen* to wrap the body in, though in such a case old linen that had been worn might have been thought sufficient. In paying respects to Christ it becomes us to be *generous*, and to serve him with the *best* that can be got, not with that which can be got at the best hand.

2. He *took down* the body mangled and macerated as it was, and *wrapped in the linen* as a treasure of great worth. Our Lord Jesus hath himself commanded to be delivered to us, sacramentally in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, which we should receive in such a manner as may best express our love to him, who loved us and died for us.

3. He *laid it in a sepulchre* of his own, in a private place. We sometimes find it spoken of in the story of the kings of Judah, as a slur upon the memory of the wicked kings, that they were not buried in the *sepulchres of the kings*; our Lord Jesus, though he did no evil but much good, and to him was given the throne of his father David, yet was buried in the graves of the common people, for it was not in this world, but in the other, that *his rest was glorious*. This sepulchre belonged to Joseph; Abraham when he had no other possession in the land of Canaan, yet had a burying-place, but Christ had not so much as that. This sepulchre was *hewn out of a rock*, for Christ died to make the grave a *refuge* and shelter to the saints, and being hewn out of a rock, it is a *strong* refuge. *O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave!* Christ himself is a *hiding place* to his people, that is, *as the shadow of a great rock*.

4. He *rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre*, for so the manner of the Jews was to bury. When Daniel was put into the lions den, a stone was laid to the mouth of it, to keep him in, as here to the door of Christ's sepulchre, but neither of them could keep off the angels visits to the prisoners.

5. Some of the good women attended the funeral, and *beheld where he was laid*, that they might come after the sabbath to anoint the dead body, because they had not time to do it now. When Moses, the mediator and lawgiver of the Jewish church, was buried, care was taken that no man should *know of his sepulchre*, Deut. xxxiv. 6. because the respects of the people towards his person were to die with him; but when our great Mediator and Lawgiver was buried, special notice was taken of his sepulchre, because he was to *rise again*: And the care taken of his body, speaks the care which he himself will take concerning his body, the church, even then when it seems to be a dead body, and as a valley full of dry bones, it shall be preserved in order to a resurrection; as shall also the dead bodies of the saints, with whose dust there is a covenant in force which shall not be forgotten. Our meditations on Christ's burial should lead us to think of our own, and should help to make the grave familiar to us, and so to make that bed easy, which we must shortly make in the darkiefs. Frequent thoughts of it would not only take off the dread and terror of it, but quicken us since the *graves* are always ready for us, to get ready for the graves, Job xvii. 1.

No. lxxxviii.

## C H A P. XVI.

In this chapter we have a short account of the resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus, and the joys and triumphs which it furnisheth all believers with, will be very acceptable to those who sympathized, and suffered, with Christ in the foregoing chapters. Here is, (1.) Christ's resurrection notified by an angel, to the women that came to the sepulchre to anoint him, ver. 1—8. (2.) His appearance to Mary Magdalen, and the account she gave of it to the disciples, ver. 9—11. (3.) His appearance to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and the report they made of it to their brethren, ver. 12, 13. (4.) His appearance to the eleven, with the commission he gave them to set up his kingdom in the world, and full instructions, and credentials, in order thereunto, ver. 14—18. (5.) His ascension into heaven, and the apostles close application to their work, and God's owning them in it, ver. 19, 20.

1. **A**ND when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. 2. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. 3. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? 4. (And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away) for it was very great. 5. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. 6. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen, he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. 7. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. 8. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled, and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

Never was there such a *sabbath*, since the sabbath was first instituted as this was, which the first words of this chapter tell us was *now past*; during all this sabbath our Lord Jesus lay in the grave. It was *to him* a sabbath of *rest*, but a *silent* sabbath; it was to his disciples a melancholy sabbath, spent in tears and fears: Never were the sabbath services in the temple such an *abomination to God*, though they had been often so, as they were now, when the chief priests that presided in them had their hands full of blood, the blood of Christ. Well, this sabbath is over, and the first day of the week is the first day of a new world. We have here,

1. The affectionate visit which the good women that had attended Christ, now made to his sepulchre, not a *superstitious* one, but a *pious* one. They set out from their lodgings *very early in the morning*, at break of day, or sooner; but either they had a long walk, or met with some hindrance, so that it was *sun-rising* by that time they got to the sepulchre. They had *bought sweet spices* too, and came not only to *bedew* the dead body with their tears, for nothing could more renew their grief than this, but to *perfume* it with their *spices*, ver. 1. Nicodemus had bought a very large quantity of *dry spices*, *myrrh* and *aloes*, which served to dry the wounds, and dry up the blood, John xix. 39. But these good women did not think that enough, they bought spices, perhaps, of another kind, some perfumed oils to *anoint him*. Note, The respects which others have shewed to Christ's name, should not hinder us from shewing our respects to it.

2. The care they were in about the rolling away of the stone, and the superseding of that care, ver. 3, 4. They said among themselves, as they were coming along, and now drew near the sepulchre, who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? for it was very great, more than they with their united strength could move. They should have thought of this before they came out, and then discretion would have bid them not go, unless they had those to go with them who could do it. And there was another difficulty much greater than this to be got over, which they knew nothing of, to wit, a guard of soldiers set to keep these pulchre; who, had they come before they were frightened away, would have frightened them away. But their gracious love to Christ carried them to the sepulchre, and see how by that time they came thither, both those difficulties were removed,



both the *stone* which they *knew of*, and the *guard* which they *knew not of*. They saw that the *stone* was rolled away, which was the first thing that amused them. Note, They who are carried by a holy zeal to seek Christ diligently, will find the difficulties that lie in their way strangely to vanish, and themselves helped over them beyond their expectation.

3. The assurance that was given them by an angel, that the Lord Jesus was risen from the dead, and had taken leave of his sepulchre, and had left him there to tell those so who came thither to enquire after him.

1. They entered into the *sepulchre*, at least a little way in, and saw the body of Jesus was not there where they left it the other night. He, who by his death undertook to pay our debt, in his resurrection took out our acquittance, for it was his discharge out of prison, and it was a fair and legal discharge, by which it appeared that his satisfaction was accepted to all the purposes for which it was intended, and the matter in dispute was determined by an incontestable evidence that he was the Son of God.

2. They saw a *young man sitting on the right side* of the sepulchre: The angel appeared in the likeness of a *man*, of a *young man*, for angels, though created in the beginning, grew not *old*, but are always in the same perfection of beauty and strength, and so shall glorified saints be when they are *as the angels*. This angel was *sitting on the right hand*, as they went into the sepulchre, *clothed with a long white garment*, a garment down to the feet, such as great men were arrayed with. The sight of him might justly have encouraged them, but they were *affrighted*. Thus many times that which should be matter of comfort to us, through our own mistakes and misapprehensions, proves a terror to us.

3. He silenceth their fears by assuring them here was cause enough for triumph, but none for trembling, *ver. 6*. *He saith to them, be not affrighted*. Note, Angels as they rejoice in the conversion of sinners, so they do also in the consolation of saints. Be not affrighted, for, (1.) You are faithful lovers of Jesus Christ, and therefore instead of being *confounded*, ought to be *comforted*. *Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified*. Note, The enquiries of believing souls after Christ, have a particular regard to him as *crucified*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. that they may know him and the fellowship of his sufferings. His being *lifted up from the earth* is that which *draws all men unto him*. Christ's cross is the ensign to which the Gentiles seek. Observe, He speaks of Jesus as one that *was crucified*; the thing is *past*, that scene is over, you must not dwell so much upon the sad circumstances of his crucifixion as to be unapt to believe the joyful news of his resurrection. He was *crucified in weakness*, yet that doth not hinder but that he may be raised in power, and therefore ye that seek him, be not *afraid of missing* of him: He *was crucified*, but he *is glorified*; and the shame of his sufferings is so far from lessening the glory of his exaltation, that that glory perfectly wipes away all the reproach of his sufferings. And therefore, after his entrance upon his glory, he never drew any veil over his sufferings, nor was shy of having his cross spoken of: The angel here that proclaims his resurrection, calls him Jesus that *was crucified*. He himself owns, *Rev. i. 18*. *I am he that liveth and was dead*; and he appears in the midst of the praises of the heavenly host as a *lamb that had been slain*, *Rev. v. 6*.

(2.) It will therefore be good news to you to hear, that instead of anointing him dead, you may rejoice in him living. *He is risen, he is not here*, not dead, but alive again; we cannot as yet shew you *him*, hereafter you will see him, but you may here see *the place where they laid him*, and you see he is gone hence, not stolen either by his enemies or friends; but *risen*.

4. He orders them to give speedy notice of this to his disciples: Thus they were made the apostles of the apostles, which was a recompence of their affection and fidelity to him, in attending him on the cross, to the grave, and in the grave: They first came and were first served; no other of the disciples durst come near his sepulchre, or enquire after him; so little danger was there of their coming by night to *steal him away*, that none came near him but a few women, who were not able so much as to *roll away the stone*.

(1.) They must tell the *disciples* that *he is risen*: It is a dismal time with them, their dear Master is dead, and all their hopes and joys are buried in his grave, they look upon their cause as sunk, and themselves ready to fall an easy prey into the hands of their enemies, so that there remains no more spirit in them, they are perfectly at their wits end, every one is contriving how to shift for himself: O go quickly to them, saith the angel, tell them *their Master is risen*, that will put some life and spirit into them, and keep them from sinking into despair. Note, (1.) Christ is not ashamed to own his poor disciples, no, not now he is in his exalted state; his preferment doth not make him shy of them, for he took early care to have it *notified* to them.

(2.) Christ is not extreme to mark what they do amiss, whose

hearts are upright with him. The disciples had very unkindly deserted him, and yet he testified this concern for them. (3.) Seasonable comforts shall be sent to those that are lamenting after the Lord Jesus, and he will find a time to manifest himself to them.

(2.) They must be sure to tell Peter. This is particularly taken notice of by this evangelist, who is supposed to have written by Peter's direction. If it were told the disciples, it would be told Peter, for as a token of his repentance for his disowning his Master, he still associated with his disciples; yet he is particularly named, *tell Peter*, for, (1.) It will be good news to him, more welcome to him than to any of them, for he is in sorrow for sin, and no tidings can be more welcome to true penitents than to hear of the resurrection of Christ, because he rose again for *their justification*. (2.) He will be afraid, lest the joy of this good news do not belong to him. Had the angel said only, *go tell his disciples*, poor Peter would have been ready to sigh and say, But I doubt I cannot look upon my self as one of them, for I disowned him, and deserve to be disowned by him; to obviate that, go to Peter by name, and tell him, he shall be as welcome as any of the rest to *see him in Galilee*. Note, A sight of Christ will be very welcome to a true penitent, and a true penitent shall be very welcome to a sight of Christ, for there is joy in heaven concerning him.

(3.) They must appoint them all, and Peter by name, to give him the meeting in Galilee, as *he said unto you*, *Matt. xxvi. 32*. In their journey down into Galilee they would have time to recollect themselves, and call to mind what he has often said to them there, that he should suffer and die, and *the third day be raised again*; whereas while they were at Jerusalem, among strangers and enemies, they could not recover themselves from the fright they had been in, nor compose themselves to the due entertainment of better tidings. Note, 1. All the meetings between Christ and his disciples are of his own appointing. 2. Christ never forgets his appointment, but will be sure to meet his people with the promised blessing in every place where he records his name. 3. In all meetings between Christ and his disciples, he is the most forward. *He goes before you*.

4. The account which the women did bring of this to the disciples, *ver. 8*. They *went out quickly*, and *ran from the sepulchre*, to make all the haste they could to the disciples, *trembling and amazed*. See how much we are enemies to ourselves and our own comfort, in not considering and mixing faith with what Christ hath said to us; Christ had often told them, that *the third day he would rise again*, had they given that its due notice and credit, they would have come to the sepulchre expecting to have found him risen, and would have received the news of it with a joyful assurance, and not with all this terror and amazement. But being ordered to tell the disciples, because they were to tell it to all the world, they would not tell it to any one else, they shewed not any thing of it to any man that they *met by the way*, for *they were afraid*, afraid it was too good news to be true. Note, Our disquieting fears often hinder us from doing that service to Christ, and to the souls of men, which if faith, and the joy of faith were strong, we might do.

9. ¶ Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. 10. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and have been seen of her, believed not. 12. ¶ After that, he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.

We have here a very short account of two of Christ's appearances, and the little credit which the report of them gained with the disciples.

1. He appeared to Mary Magdalen, to her first in the garden, which we have a particular narrative of, *John xx. 14*. It was the *out of whom he had cast seven devils*, much was forgiven her, and much was given her, and done for her, and she *loved much*; and this honour Christ did her that she was the first that saw him after his resurrection. The closer we cleave to Christ, the sooner we may expect to see him, and the more to see of him.

Now, (1.) She brings notice of what she had seen to the disciples; not only to the *eleven*, but to the rest that followed him, as *they mourned and wept*, *ver. 10*. Now was the time of which Christ had told them, that they should *mourn and lament*, *John xvi. 20*. And it was an evidence of their great love to Christ, and the deep sense they had of their loss of him. But when their weeping had endured a night or two, comfort returned, as Christ

had



had promised them, *I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.* Better news cannot be brought to disciples in tears, than to tell them of Christ's resurrection. And we should study to be comforters to disciples that are mourners, by communicating to them our experiences and what we have *seen of Christ.*

(2.) They could not give credit to the report she brought them. They heard that *he was alive*, and had been seen of her: The story was plausible enough, and yet *they believed not!* They would not say that she made the story her self, or designed to deceive them, but they fear she is *imposed upon*, and it was but a fancy that she *saw him.* Had they believed the *frequent* predictions of it from his own mouth, they would not have been now so incredulous of the report of it.

2. He appeared to two of the disciples, *as they went into the country*, ver. 12. This refers, no doubt, to that which is largely related, *Luke xxiv. 13.* of what passed between Christ and the two disciples, *going to Emmaus.* He is here said to have appeared to them in *another form*, in another dress than what he usually wore, in the form of a *traveller*, as in the garden in such a dress that Mary Magdalen took him for the gardener; but that he had really his own countenance appears by this, that *their eyes were holden* that they should not know him, and when that restraint on their eyes was taken off immediately they *knew him*, *Luke xxiv. 16, 31.* Now,

1. These two witnesses gave in their *testimony* to this proof of Christ's resurrection. *They went and told it to the residue*, ver. 13. being *satisfied* themselves they were desirous to give their brethren the *satisfaction* they had, that they might be comforted as they were.

2. This did not gain credit with all, *neither believed they them.* They suspected that their eyes also deceived them. Now there was a wise providence in it, that the proofs of Christ's resurrection were given in thus *gradually*, and admitted thus *cautiously*, that so the assurance with which the apostles preached this doctrine afterwards, when they ventured their all upon it, might be the more satisfying; we have the more reason to believe those who did themselves believe so slowly; had they swallowed it presently they might have been thought *credulous*, and their testimony the less to be *regarded*, but their *disbelieving* at first, shews that they did not believe it afterwards but upon a full conviction.

14. ¶ Afterwards he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. 15. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned. 17. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, 18. They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Here is, 1. The *conviction* which Christ gave his apostles of the truth of his resurrection, ver. 14. He *appeared to them* himself, when they were all together, *as they sat at meat*, which gave him an opportunity to *eat and drink with them* for their full satisfaction, see *Acts x. 41.* And still when he appeared to them he *upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardness of heart*, for even at the general meeting in *Galilee* some doubted, as we find *Matt. xxviii. 17.* Note, The evidences of the truth of the gospel are so full, that those who receive it not may justly be *upbraided* with their unbelief; and it is owing not to any weakness or deficiency in the proofs, but to the *hardness of the heart*, and the senselessness and stupidity of that: Though they had not till now seen him themselves, they are justly blamed *because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen*; and perhaps it was owing in part to the *pride of their hearts* that they did not; for they thought if indeed he were risen, *to whom should he delight to do the honour of shewing himself but to them?* And if he *pass them by*, and shew himself to others first, they cannot believe it is he. Thus many disbelieve the doctrine of Christ, because they think it below them to give credit to such as he has chosen to be the witnesses and publishers of it. Observe, It will not suffice for an excuse of our infidelity in the great day to say *we did not see him* after he was risen, for we ought to have believed the testimony of those who did see him.

2. The *commission* which he gave them to set up his kingdom among men by the preaching of his *gospel*, the glad tidings of reconciliation to God through a Mediator. Now observe,

1. *To whom* they were to preach the *gospel.* Hitherto they had been sent only to *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, and were forbidden to go into the *way of the Gentiles*, or into any city of the Samaritans: But now their commission is enlarged, and they are authorized to go into *all the world*, into all parts of the world, the habitable world, and to *preach the gospel* of Christ to *every creature*, to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews; to every human creature that is capable of receiving it. Inform them concerning Christ, the history of *his life*, and *death*, and *resurrection*; instruct them in the *meaning* and *intention* of these, and of the advantages which the children of men have or may have hereby; and invite them without exception to come and share in them. This is *gospel*, let this be *preached* in all places, to all persons: These eleven men could not themselves preach it to all the world, much less to *every creature* in it, but they and the other disciples, seventy in number, with those who should afterwards be added to them must *disperse* themselves several ways, and wherever they went carry the gospel along with them. They must send *others* to those places whither they could not go *themselves*, and in short make it the business of their lives to send those glad tidings *up and down the world*, with all possible fidelity and care, not as an amusement or entertainment, but as a solemn message from God to men, and an appointed means of making men happy. Tell as many as you can, and bid them tell others, it is a message of universal concern, and therefore ought to have an universal welcome, because it *gives* an universal welcome.

2. What is the *summary* of the *gospel* they are to preach, ver. 16. Set before the world life and death, good and evil. Tell the children of men that they are all in a state of misery and danger, *condemned* by their prince, and *conquered* and *enslaved* by their enemies. This is supposed in their being *saved*, which they would not need to be if they were not *lost*. Now go and tell them, (1.) That if they *believe the gospel*, and give up themselves to be Christ's disciples; if they *renounce* the devil, the world, and the flesh, and be *devoted* to Christ as their prophet, priest, and king, and to God in Christ as their God in covenant, and evidence by their constant adherence to this covenant their sincerity herein, they *shall be saved* from the guilt and power of sin, it shall not *rule* them, it shall not *ruin* them. He that is a true Christian shall be saved through Christ. *Baptism* was appointed to be the *inaugurating* rite, by which those that embraced Christ owned him; but it is here put rather for the *thing signified* than for the sign, for Simon Magus *believed* and was *baptized*, yet not *saved*, *Acts viii. 13.* *Believing with the heart and confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus*, *Rom. x. 9.* seems to be much the same with this here. Or thus, we must *assent* to gospel truths, and *consent* to gospel terms. (2.) If they *believe not*, if they receive not the record God gives concerning his Son, they cannot expect any other way of salvation, but must inevitably perish, *they shall be damned*, by the sentence of a *despised* gospel, added to that of a broken law. And even this is *gospel*, it is good news that nothing else but unbelief shall damn men, which is a sin against the remedy, Dr. Whitby here observes, that they who hence infer "That the infant seed of believers are not capable of baptism, because they cannot believe, must hence also infer that they cannot be saved; faith being here more expressly required to salvation than to baptism. And that in the latter clause baptism is omitted, because it is not simply the want of baptism, but the contemptuous neglect of it, which makes men guilty of damnation, otherwise infants might be damned for the mistakes or profaneness of their parents."

3. What power they should be endowed with for the confirmation of the doctrine they were to preach, ver. 17. *These signs shall follow them that believe*; not that all who believe shall be able to produce these signs, but some, even as many as were employed in propagating the faith, and bringing others to it; for signs are intended *for them that believe not*, see *1 Cor. xiv. 22.* It added much to the glory and evidence of the gospel, that the preachers not only wrought miracles themselves, but conferred upon others a power to work miracles, which power *followed* some of them that believed wherever they went to preach. They shall do wonders *in Christ's name*, the same name into which they were baptized, in the virtue of power derived from him, and fetched in by prayer: some particular signs are mentioned; (1.) They shall *cast out devils*; this power was more common among Christians than any other, and lasted longer, as appears by the testimonies of Justin Martyr, Origen, Irenæus, Tertullian, Minutius Felix, and others, cited by Grotius on this place. (2.) They shall *speak with new tongues*, which they had never learned or been acquainted with; and this was both a *miracle* (a miracle upon the mind) for the confirming of the truth of the gospel, and a means of spreading the gospel among those nations that had not heard it. It saved the preachers a vast labour in learning the languages; and no doubt they who by *miracle* were made *masters of languages*, were complete masters of them, and of all their native elegancies, which were proper both to *instruct* and *affect*, which would very much recommend them and their preaching. (3.) They shall *take up serpents*: This was fulfilled in Paul, who was not hurt by the *viper* that *fastened on his hand*, which was acknowledged



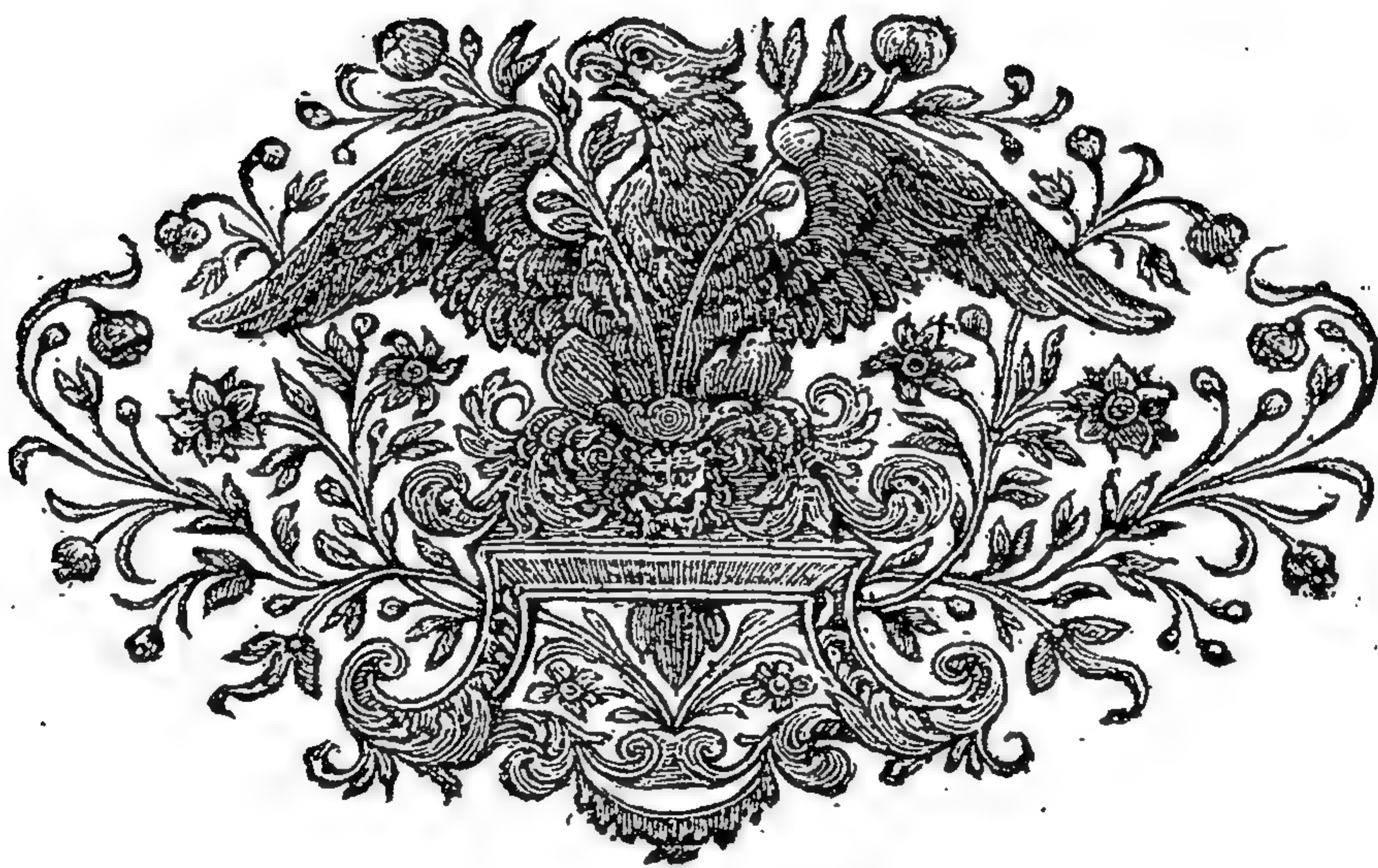
ledged a great miracle by the barbarous people, *Acts* xxviii. 5, 6. They shall be kept unhurt by that *generation of vipers*, among whom they live, and by the malice of the *old serpent*. (4.) If they be compelled by their persecutors to *drink any deadly* poisonous thing, *it shall not hurt them*: Of which very thing some instances are found in ecclesiastical history. (5.) They shall not only be preserved from hurt themselves, but they shall be enabled to do good to others; *they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*, as multitudes had done by their Master's healing touch. Many of the elders of the church had this power, as appears by *Jam.* v. 14. where, as an instituted sign of this miraculous healing, they are said to *anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord*: With what assurance of success might they go about the executing of their commission, when they had such credentials as these to produce?

19. ¶ So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Here is, 1. Christ welcomed into the upper world, ver. 19. after the Lord had spoken what he had to say to his disciples, he went up into heaven in a cloud; which we have a particular account of, *Acts* i. 9. and he had not only an admission, but an abundant entrance into his kingdom there; he was received up, received in state with loud acclamations of the heavenly hosts; and he sat on the right hand of God: sitting is a posture of rest, for now he

had finished his work, and a posture of rule, for now he too possessed of his kingdom; he sat at the right hand of God, which notes the sovereign dignity he is advanced to, and the universal agency he is intrusted with. Whatever God doth concerning us gives to us, or accepts from us, it is by his Son. Now he is glorified with the glory he had before the world.

2. Christ welcomed in this lower world; his being believed on in the world, and received up into glory are put together, 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. (1.) We have here the apostles working diligently for him they went forth and preached every where far and near; though the doctrine they preached was spiritual and heavenly, and directly contrary to the spirit and genius of the world, though it met with abundance of opposition, and was utterly destitute of all secular supports and advantages, yet the preachers of it were neither afraid nor ashamed; they were so industrious in spreading the gospel, that within a few years the sound of it went forth into the ends of the earth, *Rom.* x. 18. (2.) We have here God working effectually with them, to make their labours successful, by confirming the word with signs following, partly by the miracles that were wrought upon the bodies of people which were divine seals to the Christian doctrine, and partly the influence it had upon the minds of people, through the operation of the Spirit of God, see *Heb.* ii. 4. These were properly signs following the word, the reformation of the world, the destruction of idolatry, the conversion of sinners, the comfort of saints; and these signs still follow it, and that they may do so more and more, for the honour of Christ and the good of mankind, the evangelist prays and teaches us to say *Amen*. Father in heaven, thus let thy name be hallowed, and let thy kingdom come.





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AN  
EXPOSITION,  
WITH  
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,  
OF THE  
GOSPEL according to  
St. LUKE.

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*We are now entering into the labours of another evangelist; his name Luke; which some take to be a contraction of Lucilius; born at Antioch, so St. Jerom: Some think the only one of all the penmen of the scripture that was not of the seed of Israel: He was a Jewish proselyte, and, as some conjecture, converted to Christianity by the ministry of St. Paul at Antioch; and after his coming into Macedonia, Acts xvi. 10. he was his constant companion. He had employed himself in the study and practice of physick, hence Paul calls him Luke the beloved Physician, Col. iv. 14. And some of the pretended antients tell you he was a painter, and drew a picture of the Virgin Mary. But Dr. Whitby thinks there is nothing certain to the contrary; and that therefore it is probable he was one of the seventy disciples, and a follower of Christ when he was here upon earth; and if so, he was a native Israelite: And I see not what can be objected against this, except some uncertain traditions of the Antients, which we can build nothing upon; and against which may be opposed the testimonies of Origen and Epiphanius, who both say, that he was one of the seventy disciples. He is supposed to have written this gospel when he was associate with St. Paul in his travels, and by direction from him: And some think this is the brother whom Paul speaks of, 2 Cor. viii. 18. whose praise is in the gospel, throughout all the churches of Christ; as if the meaning of it were, That he was celebrated in all the churches for writing this gospel; and that St. Paul means this, when he speaks sometimes of his gospel, as Rom. ii. 16. But there is no ground at all for that. Dr. Cave observes, That his way and manner of writing is accurate and exact, his stile polite and elegant, sublime and lofty, yet perspicuous; and that he expresseth himself in a vein of purer Greek than is to be found in the other writers of the holy story: Thus he relates divers things more copiously than the other evangelists; and thus he especially treats of those things which relate to the priestly office of Christ. It is uncertain when, or about what time this gospel was written: Some think it was written in Achaia, during his travels with Paul seventeen years, twenty-two years say others, after Christ's ascension; others, That it was written at Rome, a little before he wrote his history.*



of the Acts of the Apostles (which is a continuation of this) when he was there with Paul, while he was a prisoner, and preaching in his own hired house, with which the history of the Acts concludes; and then Paul saith, only Luke was with him, 2 Tim. iv. 11. When he was under that voluntary confinement with Paul, he had leisure to compile these two histories: And many excellent writings the church has been indebted to a prison for: If so, it was written about twenty-seven years after Christ's ascension, and about the fourth year of Nero. Jerome saith he died when he was eighty-four years of age, and was never married. Some write, That he suffered martyrdom; but if he did, where and when is uncertain. Nor indeed is there much more credit to be given to the Christian traditions concerning the writers of the New Testament, than to the Jewish traditions concerning those of the Old Testament.

## CHAP. I.

The narrative which this evangelist gives us (or rather God by him) of the life of Christ, begins earlier than either Matthew or Mark; we have reason to thank God for them all, as we have for all the gifts and graces of Christ's ministers, which in one make up what is wanting in the other, while all put together make a harmony. In this chapter we have, (1.) Luke's preface to his gospel, or his epistle dedicatory to his friend Theophilus, ver. 1—4. (2.) The prophecy and history of the conception of John Baptist, who was Christ's fore-runner, ver. 5—25. (3.) The annunciation of the virgin Mary, or the notice given to her that she should be the mother of the Messiah, ver. 26—38. (4.) The interview between Mary the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth the mother of John, when they were both with child of those pregnant births, and the prophecies they both uttered upon that occasion, ver. 39—56. (5.) The birth and circumcision of John Baptist, six months before the birth of Christ, ver. 57—66. (6.) Zacharias's song of praise, in thankfulness for the birth of John, and in prospect of the birth of Jesus, ver. 67—69. (7.) A short account of John Baptist's infancy, ver. 80. And these do more than give us an entertaining narrative; they will lead us into the understanding of the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.

**F**ORASMUCH as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us. 2. Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word: 3. It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.

Complimental prefaces and dedications, the language of flattery, and the food and fuel of pride, are justly condemned by the wise and good; but it doth not therefore follow, that such as are useful and instructive are to be run down, such is this here, in which St. Luke dedicates his gospel to his friend Theophilus, not as to his *patron*, though he was a man of honour, to protect it, but as to his *pupil* to learn it, and hold it fast. It is not certain who this Theophilus was; the name signifies a *friend of God*, and some think it doth not mean any particular Person, but every one that is a *lover of God*; and Dr. Hammond quotes some of the Antients understanding it so: And then it teaches us, that those who are truly lovers of God, will heartily welcome the gospel of Christ, the design and tendency of which is to bring us to God. But it is rather to be understood of some particular person, probably a magistrate; because Luke gives him here the same title of respect which St. Paul gave to Festus the governour, *κατάτισε*, Acts xxvi. 25. which we there translate *most noble Festus*, and here *most excellent Theophilus*. Note, Religion doth not destroy civility and good manners, but teaches us according to the usages of our country: to give honour to them to whom honour is due.

Now observe here,

1. Why St. Luke wrote this gospel; it is certain, he was moved by the Holy Ghost, not only to the writing, but in the writing of it; but in both he was moved as a reasonable creature, and not as a mere machine; and he was made to consider,

(1.) That the things he wrote of, were things that were *most surely believed among all Christians*, and therefore things which they ought to be instructed in, that they may know what they believe; and things which ought to be transmitted to posterity, who are as much concerned in them as we are; and in order to that, to be committed to writing, which is the surest way of conveyance to the ages to come. He will not write about things of doubtful disputations, things about which Christians may safely differ from one another, and hesitate within themselves; but the

things which are and ought to be most surely believed, *περὶ ἡμῶν τῶν πραγμάτων*; the things which were performed; so some, which Christ and his apostles did, and did with such circumstances, as gave a full assurance that they were really done; so that they have gained an established, lasting credit. Note, Though it is not the foundation of our faith, yet it is a support to it, that the articles of our creed are things that have been long *most surely believed*. The doctrine of Christ is what thousands of the wisest and best of men have ventured their souls upon, with the greatest assurance and satisfaction.

(2.) That it was requisite there should be a declaration made in order of those things; that the history of the life of Christ should be methodized, and committed to writing, for the greater certainty of the conveyance. When things are put in order, we know the better where to find them, for our own use, and how to keep them for the benefit of others.

(3.) That there were many who had undertaken to publish narratives of the life of Christ; many well-meaning people that designed well, and did well, and what they published had done good, though not done by divine inspiration, nor so well done as might be, nor intended for perpetuity. Note, 1. The labours of others in the gospel of Christ, if faithful and honest, we ought to commend and encourage, and not to despise, though chargeable with many deficiencies. 2. Others services to Christ must not be reckoned to supersede ours, but rather to quicken them.

(4.) That the truth of the things he had to write, was confirmed by the concurring testimony of those that were competent, and unexceptionable witnesses of them; what had been published in writing already, and what he was now about to publish, agreed with that which had been delivered by word of mouth, over and over, by those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word, ver. 2. Note, (1.) The apostles were ministers of the word of Christ, who is the word, so some understand it, or, of the doctrine of Christ, they having received it themselves ministered it to others, 1 John i. 1. They had not a gospel to make as masters, but a gospel to preach as ministers. (2.) The ministers of the word were eye-witnesses of the things which they preached, and which is also included ear-witnesses: They did themselves hear the doctrine of Christ, and see his miracles, and had them not by report, at second hand; and therefore could not but speak with the greatest assurance the things they had seen and heard, Acts iv. 20. (3.) They were so from the beginning of Christ's ministry, ver. 2. He had his disciples with him when he wrought his first miracle, John ii. 11. They companied with him all the time that he went in and out among them, Acts i. 21. so that they not only heard, and saw all that which was sufficient to confirm their faith, but if there had been any thing to shock it, they had opportunity to discover it. (4.) The written gospel which we have to this day, exactly agrees with the gospel that was preached in the first days of the church. (5.) That he himself had a perfect understanding of the things he wrote of from the first, ver. 3. Some think here is a tacit reflexion upon those that had written before him, that they had not a perfect understanding of what they wrote, and therefore here am I, send me; (— *facit indignatio versum*) or rather without reflecting on them, he asserts his own ability for this undertaking; it seemed good to me having attained to the exact knowledge of all things, *ἀνωθεν*, from above, so I think it should be rendered; for if he meant the same with *from the beginning*, ver. 2. as our translation intimates, he would have used the same word.

(1.) He had diligently searched into these things, had followed after them; so the word is, as the Old Testament prophets are said to have enquired and searched diligently, 1 Pet. i. 10. He had not taken things so easily and superficially, as others who had written before him, but made it his business to inform himself concerning particulars. (2.) He had received his intelligence, not only by tradition, as others had done, but by revelation, confirming that tradition, and securing him from any error or mistake in the recording of it. He sought it from above, so the word intimates, and from thence he had it; thus, like Elihu, he fetched his knowledge from afar. He wrote his history as Moses wrote his, of things reported by tradition, but ratified by inspiration. (3.) He could therefore say, That he had a perfect understanding of these things: He knew them, *ἀκριβῶς*, accurately, exactly. Now having received this from above, it seemed good to me to communicate it, for such a talent as this ought not to be buried.



2. Observe why he sent it to *Theophilus*: I wrote unto thee these things *in order*, not that thou mayest give reputation to the work, but that thou mayest be edified by it, *ver. 4.* *That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.* (1.) It is implied, that he had been *instructed* in these things either before his baptism, or since, or both, according to the rule, *Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.* Probably Luke had baptized him, and knew how well instructed he was; *περὶ ἐν κατηχήσει, concerning which thou hast been catechised*, so the word is; the most knowing Christians began with being catechised. *Theophilus* was a person of quality, perhaps of noble birth, and so much the more pains should be taken with such, when they are young, to teach them the principles of the oracles of God, that they may be fortified against the temptations, and furnished for the opportunities of a high condition in the world. (2.) It was intended that he should *know the certainty of those things*, should understand them more clearly, and believe them more firmly. There is a *certainty* in the gospel of Christ, there is that in them which we may build upon: And those who have been well instructed in the things of God when they were young, should afterwards give diligence to *know the certainty* of those things; to know not only what we believe, but why we believe it, that we may be able to give a *reason of the hope that is in us.*

5. **T**HERE was in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. 6. And they were both righteous before God; walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. 7. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. 8. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priests office before God in the order of his course, 9. According to the custom of the priests office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without, at the time of incense. 11. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. 14. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. 15. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the holy Ghost, even from his mothers womb. 16. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 17. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. 18. And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. 19. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God: and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. 20. And behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. 21. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. 22. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckened unto them, and remained speechless. 23. And it came to pass, that as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. 24. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid her self five months, saying, 25. Thus hath the Lord dealt with me, in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

The two preceding evangelists had agreed to begin the gospel with the baptism of John, and his ministry; which commenced about six months before our Saviour's publick ministry, (and now things were near a crisis, six months was a deal of time, which before was but a little) and therefore this evangelist designing to give a more particular account than had been given of

our Saviour's conception and birth, determines to do so of John Baptist; for in both, he was his harbinger and fore-runner, the morning-star to the Sun of righteousness; not only because it is commonly reckoned a satisfaction and entertainment, to know something of the original extraction, and early days of those who afterwards prove great men, but because in the beginning of these there were many things miraculous, and presages of what they afterwards proved; in these verses our inspired historian begins as early as the conception of John Baptist. Now observe here,

First, The account given of *his parents*, *ver. 5.* They lived in the days of Herod the king, who was a foreigner, and a deputy for the Romans, who had lately made Judea a province of the empire. This is taken notice of, to shew, that the scepter was quite departed from Judah, and therefore now was the time for Shiloh to come, according to Jacob's prophecy, *Gen. xlix. 10.* The family of David was now sunk, when it was to rise and flourish again in the Messiah. Note, None ought to despair of the reviving and flourishing of religion, even then when civil liberties are lost: Israel is enslaved, yet then comes the glory of Israel.

Now the father of John Baptist was a priest, a son of Aaron, his name Zacharias. No families in the world were ever so honoured of God, as those of Aaron and David; with one was made the covenant of priesthood, with the other that of royalty; they had both forfeited their honour, yet the gospel again puts honour upon both in their latter days, on that of Aaron in John Baptist, on that of David, in Christ, and then they were both extinguished and lost. Christ was of David's house, his fore-runner of Aaron's, for his priestly agency and influence opened the way to his kingly authority and dignity. This Zacharias was of the course of Abia; when in David's time the family of Aaron was multiplied, he divided them into twenty-four courses, for the more regular performance of their office, that it might never be either neglected for want of hands, or engrossed by a few. The eighth of those was that of Abia, *1 Chron. xxiv. 10.* who was descended from Eleazar, Aaron's eldest son: but Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that many of the families of the priests were lost in the captivity, so that after their return, they took in those of other families, but retaining the names of the heads of the respective courses. The wife of this Zacharias was of the daughters of Aaron too, and her name Elisabeth, the very same name with Elisheba the wife of Aaron, *Exod. vi. 23.* The priests (Josephus saith) were very careful to marry within their own family, that they might maintain the dignity of the priesthood, and keep it without mixture.

Now that which is observed concerning Zacharias and Elisabeth is,

1. That they were a very religious couple, *ver. 6.* They were both righteous before God; they were so in his sight, whose judgment we are sure is according to truth; they were sincerely and really so. They are righteous indeed that are so before God, as Noah in his generation, *Gen. vii. 1.* they approved themselves to him, and he was graciously pleased to accept them. It is a happy thing, when those that are joined to each other in marriage, are both joined to the Lord: and it is especially requisite that the priests, the Lord's ministers, should with their yoke-fellows be righteous before God, that they may be examples to the flock, and rejoice their hearts. They walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (1.) Their being righteous before God was evidenced by the course and tenor of their conversations; they shewed it not by their talk, but by their works; by the way they walked in, and the rule they walked by. (2.) They were of a piece with themselves; for their devotions and their conversations agreed. They walked not only in the ordinances of the Lord, which related to divine worship, but in the commandments of the Lord, which have reference to all the instances of a good conversation, and must be regarded. (3.) They were universal in their obedience, not that they never did in any thing come short of their duty, but it was their constant care and endeavour to come up to it. (4.) Herein though they were not sinless, yet they were blameless; no body could charge them with any open scandalous sin; they lived honestly and inoffensively, as ministers and their families are in a special manner concerned to do, that the ministry be not blamed in their blame.

2. That they had been long childless, *ver. 7.* Children are a heritage of the Lord. But there are many of his heirs in a married state, that yet are denied this heritage; they are valuable, deserving blessings; yet many there are who are righteous before God, and if they had children, would bring them up in his fear, that yet are not thus blessed, while the men of this world are full of children, *Phil. xvii. 14.* And send forth their little ones like a flock, *John xxi. 11.* Elisabeth was barren, and they began to despair of ever having children, for they were both now well stricken in years, when the women that have been most fruitful leave off bearing. Many eminent persons were born of mothers that had been long childless, as Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samson, Samuel, and so here John Baptist, to make their birth the more remarkable, and the blessing of it the more valuable to their parents; and to shew that when God keeps his people long



long waiting for mercy, he sometimes is pleased to recompense them for their patience, by doubling the worth of it when it comes.

Secondly, The appearing of an angel to his father Zacharias, as he was ministering in the temple, *ver. 8, 11.* Zacharias the prophet was the last of the Old Testament that was conversant with angels; and Zacharias the priest, the first in the New Testament. Observe,

1. How Zacharias was employed in the service of God, *ver. 8.* He executed the priest's office before God in order of his course; it was his week of waiting, and he was upon duty. Though his family was not built up, or made to grow, yet he made conscience of doing the work of his own place and day. Though we have not desired mercies, yet we must keep close to enjoined services; and in our diligent and constant attendance on them, we may hope that mercy and comfort will come at last. Now 'it fell to Zacharias's lot to burn incense morning and evening, for that week of his waiting, as other services fell to other priests by lot likewise. The services were directed by lot that some might not decline them, and others engross them; and that the disposal of the lot being from the Lord, they might have the satisfaction of a divine call to the work. This was not the high priest's burning incense on the day of atonement, as some have fondly imagined, and thought by that to find out the time of our Saviour's birth; but it is plain, it was the burning of the daily incense at the altar of incense, *ver. 11.* which was in the temple, *ver. 9.* not in the most holy place into which the high priest entered. The Jews say, That one and the same priest burned not incense twice in all his days, there were such a multitude of them; at least, never more than one week: it is very probable that this was upon the sabbath-day, because there was a multitude of people attending, *ver. 10.* which ordinarily was not on a week day; and thus God usually puts honour upon his own day. And then if Dr. Lightfoot reckon with the help of the Jewish calendars, that this course of Abia fell on the seventeenth day of the third month, the month Sivan, answering to part of May, and part of June; it is worth observing, that the portions of the law and the prophets, which were read this day in the synagogues, were very agreeable to that which was a doing in the temple; namely, the law of the Nazarites, *Numb. vi.* and the conception of Sampson, *Judg. xiii.*

While Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, the whole multitude of the people were praying without, *ver. 10.* Dr. Lightfoot saith there were constantly in the temple, at the hour of prayer, the priests of that course that then served, and if it were the sabbath-day, those of that course also, that had been in waiting the week before; and the Levites that served under the priests, and the men of the station, as the Rabbins call them, who were the representatives of the people, in putting their hands upon the head of the sacrifices, and many besides, who, moved by devotion, left their employments for that time, to be present at the service of God; and those would make up a great multitude, especially on sabbaths and feast days: now these all addressed themselves to their devotions (in mental prayer, for their voice was not heard) when by the tinkling of a bell they had notice that the priest was gone in to burn incense. Now observe here (1.) That the true Israel of God, always were a praying people; and prayer is the great and principal piece of service by which we give honour to God, and fetch in favours from him, and keep up our communion with him. (2.) That then when ritual and ceremonial appointments were in full force, as this of burning incense, yet moral and spiritual duties were required to go along with them, and were principally looked at. David knew that when he was at a distance from the altar, his prayer might be heard without incense, for it might be directed before God as incense, *Psal. cxli. 2.* But when he was compassing the altar, the incense could not be accepted without prayer, no more than the shell without the kernel. 3. That it is not enough, for us to be where God is worshipped, if our hearts do not join in the worship, and go along with the minister in all the parts of it. If he burn the incense never so well, in the most pertinent, judicious, lively prayer, if we be not at the same time praying in concurrence with him, what will it avail us? 4. All the prayers we offer up to God here, in his courts are acceptable, and successful only in the virtue of the incense of Christ's intercession, in the temple of God above. To this usage in the temple service, there seems to be an allusion, *Rev. viii. 1, 3, 4.* where we find that there was silence in heaven, as there was in the temple, for half an hour, while the people were silently lifting up their hearts to God in prayer; and that there was an angel, the angel of the covenant, who offered up much incense, with the prayers of all saints, before the throne. We cannot expect an interest in Christ's intercession, if we do not pray, and pray with our spirits, and continue instant in prayer. Nor can we expect that the best of our prayers should gain acceptance, and bring in an answer of peace, but through the mediation of Christ, who ever lives making intercession.

2. How, when he was thus employed, he was honoured with a messenger, a special messenger sent from heaven to him, *ver. 11.* There appeared unto him an angel of the Lord. Some observe, that we never read of an angel appearing in the temple with a

message from God, but only this one to Zacharias; because there God had other ways of making known his mind, as the Urin and Thummim, and by a still small voice from between the cherubims; but the ark and the oracle were wanting in the second temple, and therefore when an express is to be sent to a priest in the temple, an angel was to be employed in it, and thereby the gospel was to be introduced, for that, as the law, was given at first very much by the ministry of angels, the appearance of which we often read of in the Gospels and the Acts, though the design both of the law and the gospel, when brought to perfection, was, to settle another way of correspondence, more spiritual, between God and man. This angel stood on the right side of the altar of incense, the north-side of it, saith Dr. Lightfoot, on Zacharias's right hand; compare this with *Zech. iii. 1.* where Satan stands at the right hand of Joshua the priest, to resist him; but Zacharias had a good angel standing at his right hand to encourage him. Some think this angel appeared, coming out of the most holy place, which led him to stand at the right side of the altar.

3. What impression this made upon Zacharias, *ver. 12.* When Zacharias saw him, it was a surprize upon him, even to a degree of terror, for he was troubled, and fear fell upon him, *ver. 12.* Though he was righteous before God, and blameless in his conversation, yet he could not be without some frightful apprehensions at the sight of one whose visage and surrounding lustre spoke him more than human. Ever since man sinned, his mind has been unable to bear the glory of such revelations, and his conscience afraid of evil tidings brought by them; even Daniel himself could not bear it, *Dan. x. 8.* And for this reason God chuseth to speak to us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid.

Thirdly, The message which the angel had to deliver to him, *ver. 13.* He began his message as angels generally did, with fear not. Perhaps it had never been Zacharias's lot to burn incense before, and being a very serious, conscientious man, we may suppose him full of care to do it well, and perhaps when he saw the angel was afraid, lest he came to rebuke him for some mistake or miscarriage; no, saith the angel, fear not; I have no ill tidings to bring thee from heaven. Fear not, but compose thy self, that thou mayest, with a sedate and even spirit, receive the message I have to deliver to thee.

Let us see what that is,

1. The prayers he has often made, shall now receive an answer of peace. Fear not Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard. (1.) If he means his particular prayer for a son, to build up his family, it must be the prayers he had formerly made for that mercy, when he was likely to have children, but we may suppose, now he and his wife were both well stricken in years, as they had done expecting it, so they had done praying for it: like Moses, it sufficeth them, and they speak no more to God of that matter, *Deut. iii. 26.* But God will now in giving this mercy, look a great way back, to the prayers that he had made long since, for and with his wife, as Isaac for and with his, *Gen. xxv. 21.* Note, Prayers of faith are filed in heaven, and are not forgotten, though the thing prayed for is not presently given in. Prayers made when we were young and coming into the world, may be answered when we are old and going out of the world. But, (2.) If he means the prayers he was now making, and offering up with his incense, we may suppose those were, according to the duty of his place, for the Israel of God, and their welfare, and the performance of the promises made to them concerning the Messiah, and the coming of his kingdom; this prayer of thine is now heard; for thy wife shall now shortly conceive him that is to be the Messiah's fore-runner. Some of the Jewish writers themselves say, That the priest when he burnt incense prayed for the salvation of the whole world, and now that prayer shall be heard. Or, (3.) In general, the prayers thou now makest, and all thy prayers, are accepted of God, and come up for a memorial before him, as the angel said to Cornelius, when he visited him at prayer, *Acts x. 30, 31.* and this shall be the sign that thou art accepted of God, Elisabeth shall bear thee a son. Note, It is very comfortable to praying people, to know that their prayers are heard; and those mercies are doubly sweet that are given in answer to prayer.

2. He shall have a son in his old age, by Elisabeth his wife, who had been long barren, that by this birth, which was next door to miraculous, people might be prepared to receive and believe a virgin's bringing forth a son, which was perfectly miraculous. He is directed what name to give his son, call him John; in Hebrew Johanan, a name we often meet with in the Old Testament: it signifies gracious. The priests must beseech God that he will be gracious, *Mal. i. 9.* and must so bless the people, *Numb. vi. 25.* Zacharias was now praying thus, and the angel tells him his prayer is heard, and he shall have a son, whom, in token of an answer to his prayer, he shall call gracious, or, the Lord will be gracious, *Isa. xxx. 18, 19.*

3. This son shall be the joy of his family, and of all his relations, *ver. 14.* he shall be another Isaac, thy laughter; and some think that is partly intended in his name, John; he shall be a welcome child. Thou for thy part shalt have joy and gladness. Note, Mercies that have been long waited for, when they come



at last are the more acceptable. He shall be such a son as thou shalt have reason to rejoice in; many parents, if they could foresee what their children will prove, instead of *rejoicing* at their birth, would wish they had *never been*; but I will tell thee what thy son will be; and then thou wilt not need to *rejoice with trembling* at his birth, as the best must do, but mayst rejoice with triumph at it. Nay, and *many shall rejoice at his birth*; all the relations of the family will rejoice in it, and all its well wishers, because it is for the honour and comfort of the family, *ver. 58*. All good people will rejoice, that such a religious couple as Zachary and Elisabeth have a son, because they will give him a good education, such as it may be hoped will make him a publick blessing to his generation. Yea and perhaps many shall rejoice by an *unaccountable instinct*, as a preface of the joyous days the gospel will introduce.

4. This son shall be a mighty favourite of heaven, and a mighty blessing to the earth. The honour of having a son, is nothing, to the honour of having such a son.

1. He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and those are great indeed that are so in God's sight, not those that are so in the eye of a vain and carnal world. God will set him before his face continually, will employ him in his work, and send him on his errands, and that shall make him truly great and honourable. He shall be a prophet, yea more than a prophet, and upon that account, as great as any that ever were born of women, *Mat. xi. 11*. He shall live very much retired from the world, out of mens sight; and when he makes a publick appearance, it will be very mean, but he shall be much, he shall be great in the sight of the Lord.

2. He shall be a Nazarite set apart to God, from every thing that is polluting; and in token of that, according to the law of Nazariteship, he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, or rather, neither old wine nor new; for most think the word here translated *strong drink*, signifies some sort of wine; perhaps those that we call *made wines*; or any thing that is intoxicating. He shall be as Sampson was by the divine precept, *Judg. xiii. 7*. and Samuel by his mother's vow, *1 Sam. i. 11*. a Nazarite for life. It is spoken of, as a great instance of God's favour to his people, that he raised up of their sons for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites, *Amos ii. 11*. as if those that were designed for prophets were trained up under the discipline of the Nazarites; Samuel and John Baptist were; which intimates that those that would be eminent servants of God, and employed in eminent services, must learn to live a life of self-denial and mortification, must be dead to the pleasures of sense, and keep their minds from every thing that is darkening and disturbing to them.

3. He shall be abundantly fitted and qualified for those great and eminent services, to which in due time he shall be called. He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb, and, as soon as it is possible, he shall appear to have been so. Observe, (1.) Those that would be filled with the Holy Ghost, must be sober and temperate, and very moderate in the use of wine and strong drink; for that is it that fits him for this: *Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit*, with which that is not consistent, *Eph. v. 18*. (2.) It is possible that infants may be wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, even from their mother's womb, for John Baptist even then was filled with the Holy Ghost, who took possession of his heart betimes; and an early specimen was given of it, when he leaped in his mother's womb for joy, at the approach of the Saviour; and afterwards it appeared very early that he was sanctified. God has promised to pour out his Spirit upon the seed of believers, *Isa. xlv. 3*. and their first springing up in a dedication of themselves betimes to God, is the fruit of it, *ver. 4, 5*. Who then can forbid water that they should not be baptized, who for ought we know (and we can say no more of the adult, witness Simon Magus) have received the Holy Ghost as well as we, and have the seeds of grace sown in their hearts? *Acts x. 47*.

4. He shall be instrumental for the conversion of many souls to God, and the preparing of them to receive and entertain the gospel of Christ, *ver. 16, 17*.

1. He shall be sent to the children of Israel, to the nation of the Jews, to whom the Messiah also was first sent, and not to the Gentiles; to the whole nation, and not to the family of the priests only, with which, though he was himself of that family, we do not find he had any particular intimacy, nor influence upon them.

2. He shall go before the Lord their God, i. e. before the Messiah, whom they must expect to be not their king, in the sense wherein they commonly take it, a temporal prince to their nation, but their Lord and their God, to rule and defend, and serve them in a spiritual way, by his influence on their hearts. Thomas knew this, when he said to Christ, my Lord, and my God, better than Nathanael did, when he said, Rabbi, Thou art the king of Israel. John shall go before him, a little before him, to give notice of his approach, and to prepare people to receive him.

3. He shall go in the spirit and power of Elias. That is, (1.) He shall be such a man as Elias was, and do such work as Elias did; shall, like him, wear a hairy garment, and a leathern girdle, and live retired from the world; shall, like him, preach the necessity of repentance and reformation to a very corrupt and de-

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generate age; shall, like him, be bold and zealous in reproofing sin, and witnessing against it even in the greatest; and be hated and persecuted for it, by a Herod and his Herodias, as Elias was by an Ahab, and his Jezebel. He shall be carried on in his work as Elias was, by a divine spirit and power, which shall crown his ministry with wonderful success. As Elias went before the writing prophets of the Old Testament, and did as it were usher in that signal period of the Old Testament dispensation by a little writing of his own, *2 Chron. xxi. 12*. So John Baptist went before Christ and his apostles, and introduced the gospel dispensation, by preaching the substance of the gospel doctrine and duty, *Repent, with an eye to the kingdom of heaven*. (2.) He shall be that very person who was prophesied of by Malachi, under the name of Elijah, *Mal. iv. 5*. who should be sent before the coming of the day of the Lord. Behold! I send you a prophet even Elias, not Elias the Tishbite, as the LXX have corruptly read it, to favour the Jews traditions, but a prophet in the spirit and power of Elias, as the angel here expounds it.

4. He shall turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, i. e. shall incline their hearts to receive the Messiah, and bid him welcome, by awakening them to a sense of sin, and a desire of righteousness. Whatever has a tendency to turn us from iniquity, as John's preaching and baptism had, will turn us to Christ as our Lord and our God: For those who through grace are wrought upon to shake off the yoke of sin, that is, the dominion of the world and the flesh, will soon be persuaded to take upon them the yoke of the Lord Jesus.

5. Hereby he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, i. e. of the Jews to the Gentiles; shall help to conquer the rooted prejudices which the Jews have against the Gentiles, which was done by the gospel, as far as it prevailed; and was began to be done by John Baptist, who came for a witness that all through him might believe, who baptized and taught Roman soldiers, as well as Jewish Pharisees, and who cured the pride and confidence of those Jews, who gloried in their having Abraham to their father; and told them, that God would out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, *Matt. iii. 9*. which would tend to cure their enmity to the Gentiles. Dr. Lightfoot observes, That it is the constant usage of the prophets to speak of the church of the Gentiles, as children to the Jewish church, *Isa. liv. 5, 6, 13*. —*lx. 4, 9*. —*lxii. 5*. —*lxvi. 12*. When the Jews that embraced the faith of Christ were brought to join in communion with the Gentiles, that did so too, then the heart of the fathers was turned to the children. And he shall turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, i. e. he shall introduce the gospel, by which the Gentiles that are now disobedient, shall be turned, not so much to their fathers, the Jews, but to the faith of Christ, here called the wisdom of the just, in communion with the believing Jews; or thus, he shall turn the hearts of the fathers with the children, i. e. of old and young; shall be instrumental to bring some of every age to be religious, to work a great reformation in the Jewish nation, to bring them off from a ritual traditional religion, which they had rested in, and to bring them up to substantial serious godliness: And the effect of this will be, that enmities will be slain, and discord made to cease; and they that are at variance being united in his baptism, will be better reconciled one to another. And this agrees with the account Josephus gives of John Baptist, *Antiq. lib. 18. cap. 7*. "That he was a good man, and taught the Jews the exercise of virtue, in piety towards God, and righteousness towards one another, and that they should convene and knit together in baptism." And he saith, "The people flocked after him, and were exceedingly delighted in his doctrine." Thus he turned the hearts of fathers and children to God, and one another, by turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Observe, (1.) True religion is the wisdom of just men, in distinction from the wisdom of this world: It is both our wisdom, and our duty to be religious, there is both equity and prudence in it. (2.) It is not impossible but that those who have been unbelieving and disobedient, may be turned to the wisdom of the just; divine grace can conquer the greatest ignorances and prejudices. (3.) The great design of the gospel is, to bring people home to God, and to bring them nearer to one another; and on this errand John Baptist is sent. And in the mention that is twice made of his turning people, there seems to be an allusion to the name of the Tishbite, which is given to Elijah, which some think doth not denote the country, or city he was of, but has an appellative signification, and therefore they render it Elijah the converter; one that was much employed, and very successful in conversion work: The Elias of the New Testament is therefore said to turn, or convert, many to the Lord their God.

6. Hereby he shall make ready a people prepared for the Lord; shall dispose the minds of people to receive the doctrine of Christ, that thereby they may be prepared for the comforts of his coming. Note, 1. All that are to be devoted to the Lord, and made happy in him, must first be prepared and made ready for him. We must be prepared by grace in this world, for glory in the other; by the terrors of the law, for the comforts of the gospel; by the spirit of bondage, for the Spirit of adoption. 2. Nothing has a more direct tendency to prepare people for Christ, than the doctrine of repentance received and submitted



to: When sin is thereby made grievous, Christ will become very precious.

Fourthly, Zacharias's unbelief of the angel's prediction, and the rebuke he was laid under for that unbelief. He heard all that the angel had to say, and should have bowed his head, and worshipped the Lord, saying, *Be it unto thy servant according to the word which thou hast spoken*, but it was not so: We are here told,

1. What his unbelief spoke, *ver. 18.* He said to the angel, *Whereby shall I know this?* This was not a humble petition for the confirming of his faith, but a peevish objection against what was said to him as altogether incredible; as if he should say, I can never be made to believe this. He could not but perceive that it was *an angel* that spake to him, the message delivered, having reference to the Old Testament prophecies, carried much of its own evidence along with it. There are many instances in the Old Testament of those that had children when they were old, yet he cannot believe he shall have this child of promise, *for I am an old man*, and my wife hath not only been all her days barren, but is now well *stricken in years*, and not likely ever to have children; therefore he must have a *sign* given him, or he will not believe. Though the appearance of an angel, which had been long disused in the church, was sign enough; though he had this notice given him in the temple, the place of God's oracles, where he had reason to think no evil angel would be permitted to come; though it was given him when he was praying and burning incense; and though a firm belief of that great principle of religion, that God has an almighty power, and with him *nothing is impossible*, which we ought not only to *know*, but to teach others, was enough to silence all objections: yet considering his own body, and his wife's too much, unlike a son of Abraham, he *staggered at the promise*, Rom. iv. 19, 20.

2. How his unbelief was silenced, and he silenced for it.

1. The angel *stops his mouth* by asserting his authority; doth he ask, *whereby shall I know this?* Let him know it by this, *I am Gabriel*, *ver. 19.* He puts his name to his prophecy, doth as it were sign it with his own hand, *teste meipso*; take my word for it. Angels have sometimes refused to tell their names, as to Manoah and his wife; but this angel readily saith, *I am Gabriel*, which signifies *the power of God*; or, *the mighty one of God*, intimating, that the God who bid him say this, was able to make it good. He also makes himself known by this name, to put him in mind of the notices of the Messiah's coming sent to Daniel by the *man Gabriel*, Dan. viii. 16. — ix. 21. *I am the same* that was sent then, and am sent now in pursuance of the same intention. He is Gabriel that *stands in the presence of God*, an immediate attendant upon the throne of God. The prime ministers of state in the Persian court are described by this, that they saw *the king's face*, Esther i. 14. Though I am now talking with thee here, yet *I stand in the presence of God*: I know his eye is upon me, and I dare not say any more than I have warrant to say. But I declare *I am sent to speak to thee*, sent on purpose, to *shew thee these glad tidings*, which being so well worthy of all acceptation, thou oughtest to have received cheerfully.

2. The angel *stops his mouth* indeed, by exerting his power, that thou mayest object no more, *behold, thou shalt be dumb*, *ver. 20.* If thou wilt have a sign for the support of thy faith, it shall be such a one as shall be also the punishment of thine unbelief, thou shalt not be able to speak till the day that these things shall be performed, *ver. 20.* Thou shalt be both *dumb* and *deaf*, the same words signify both; and it is plain, that he lost his hearing as well as his speech, for his friends *made signs* to him, *ver. 26.* as well as he to them, *ver. 22.* Now in striking him dumb, (1.) God dealt justly with him, because he had objected against God's word: And from hence we may take occasion to admire the patience of God, and his forbearance towards us, that we, who have so often spoke to his dishonour, yet have not been struck dumb as Zacharias was, as we had been if God had dealt with us according to our sins. (2.) God dealt *kindly* with him, and very tenderly and graciously. For (1.) Thus he prevented his speaking any more such distrustful, unbelieving words. If he have *thought evil*, and will not himself *lay his hand upon his mouth*, nor keep it as with a bridle, God will: It is better not to speak at all, than to *speak wickedly*. (2.) Thus he confirmed his faith; and by his being disabled to speak, he is enabled to think the better: if by the rebukes we are under for our sin, we be brought to give more credit to the word of God, we have no reason to complain of them. (3.) Thus he was kept from *divulging* the vision, and *boasting* of it, which otherwise he would have been apt to do, whereas it was designed for the present to be lodged as a secret with him. (4.) It was a great mercy that God's word should be fulfilled in their season, notwithstanding his sinful distrust. The *unbelief of man* shall not make the promises of God of none effect, they shall be fulfilled in their season, and he shall not be for ever dumb, but only till the day that these things shall be performed, and then thy lips shall be opened, that thy mouth may shew forth God's praise. Thus, though God chasten the iniquity of his people with the rod, yet his loving kindness he will not take away.

Fifthly, The return of Zacharias to the people, and at length to his family, and the conception of this child of promise, the son of his old age.

1. The people staid expecting Zacharias to come out of the temple, because he was to pronounce the blessing upon them, in the name of the Lord; and though he staid beyond the usual time, yet they did not, as is too common in Christian congregations, hurry away without the blessing, but waited for him, marveling that he tarried so long in the temple, and afraid lest something was amiss, *ver. 21.*

2. When he came out he was *speechless*, *ver. 22.* He was now to have dismissed the congregation with a blessing, but is dumb and not able to do it, that the people may be minded to expect the Messiah who can command the blessing, who *blesseth indeed*, and in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed. Aaron's priesthood is now shortly to be silenced, and set aside, to make way for the bringing in of a better hope.

3. He made a shift to give them to understand that he had seen a vision, by some awful signs he made, for he *beckoned to them*, and remained *speechless*, *ver. 22.* This represents to us the weakness and deficiency of the Levitical priesthood, in comparison with Christ's priesthood, and the dispensation of the gospel. The Old Testament speaks by signs, gives us some intimations of divine and heavenly things, but *imperfect* and uncertain; it *beckens to us*, but remains *speechless*; it is the gospel that speaks to us articulately, and gives us a clear view of that which in the Old Testament was seen through a glass darkly.

4. He staid out the days of his ministration; for his lot being to burn incense, he could do that, though he was dumb and deaf. When we cannot perform the service of God so well as we would, yet if we perform it so well as we can, God will accept of us in it.

5. He then returned to his family, and his wife conceived, *ver. 23, 24.* She conceived by virtue of the promise, and being sensible of it, she hid her self five months; she kept house, and kept it private, and did not go abroad so much as she used to do, (1.) Lest she should do her self any prejudice, so as might occasion her miscarrying, or any hurt to the conception. (2.) Lest she should contract any ceremonial pollution which might intrench upon the Nazariteship of her child, remembering the command given to Samson's mother in a like case; and applying it to her self, she must not touch any unclean thing while she is with child of a Nazarite, Judg. xiii. 14. And though five months are mentioned, because of what follows in the sixth month, yet we may suppose, she did in like manner take care of her self during the whole time of her being with child. (3.) Some think it was in an excess of modesty that she hid her self, ashamed it should be said that one of her age should be with child: *Shall she have pleasure being old, her lord being old also?* Gen. xviii. 12. Or, it was in token of her humility, that she might not seem to boast of the honour God had put upon her. (4.) She hid her self for devotion, that she might spend her time in prayer and praise. The saints are God's hidden ones; she gives this reason for her retirement, for thus hath the Lord dealt with me; not only thus graciously, in giving me a child, but thus honourably in giving me such a child as is to be a Nazarite, for so her husband might by writing signify to her. He hath taken away my reproach among men. Fruitfulness was looked upon to be so great a blessing among the Jews, because of the promises of the increase of their nation, and the rising of the Messiah among them, that it was a great reproach to be barren; and those who were so, though never so blameless, yet were concluded to be guilty of some great sin unknown, for which they were so punished: Now Elisabeth triumphs, that not only this reproach is taken away, but great glory is put upon her instead of it; Thus hath the Lord dealt with me beyond any thought or expectation of mine in the days wherein he looked on me. Note, In God's gracious dealings with us, we ought to observe his gracious regards to us. He has looked on us with compassion and favour, and therefore hath thus dealt with us.

26. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God, unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary. 28. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. 29. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. 30. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. 31. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. 32. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Highest; and Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. 33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35. And the angel answered and said unto her, The holy



holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God. 36. And behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37. For with God nothing shall be impossible. 38. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

We have here notice given us of all it was fit we should know concerning the incarnation, and conception of our blessed Saviour, six months after the conception of John. The same angel, Gabriel, that was employed in making known to Zacharias God's purpose concerning *his son*, is employed in this also; for in this, the same glorious work of redemption, which was begun in that, is *carried on*. As bad angels are none of the redeemed, so good angels are none of the redeemers, yet they are employed by the Redeemer, as his messengers, and they go cheerfully on his errands, because they are his Father's *humble servants*, and his children's *heartly friends*, and well-wishers.

First, We have here an account given of the mother of our Lord, of whom he was to be born, whom though we are not to pray to, yet we ought to praise God for.

1. Her name was Mary, the same name with Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron; the name signifies *exalted*, and a great elevation it was to her indeed, to be thus *favoured* above all the daughters of the house of David.

2. She was a daughter of the royal family, lineally descended from David, and she herself, and all her friends knew it, for she went under the title and character of the *house of David*, though she was poor and low in the world: and she was enabled by God's providence, and the care of the Jews to preserve their genealogies, to *make it out*; and as long as the promise of the Messiah was to be fulfilled, it was *worth keeping*; but for those now, who are brought low in the world, to have descended from persons of honour, is not worth mentioning.

3. She was a *virgin*, a pure unspotted one, but *espoused* to one of the same royal stock, but like her, of low estate; so that upon both accounts, there was (as it is fit there should be) an equality between them; his name Joseph, he also was *of the house of David*, Matt. i. 20. Christ's mother was a *virgin*, because he was not to be born by ordinary generation, but miraculously; it was necessary he should be so, that though he must partake of the nature of man, yet not of the corruption of that nature: but he was born of a *virgin espoused*, made up to be married, and contracted, to put honour upon the married state, that that might not be brought into contempt (which was an ordinance in innocency) by the Redeemer's being born of a virgin.

4. She lived in Nazareth, a *city of Galilee*, a remote corner of the country, and in no reputation for religion or learning, but it bordered upon the heathen, and therefore was called *Galilee of the Gentiles*; Christ's having his relations resident there, intimates favour in reserve for the Gentile world. And Dr. Lightfoot observes, that Jonah was by birth a Galilean, and Elijah and Elisha very much conversant in Galilee, who were all famous *prophets of the Gentiles*. The angel was sent to her from Nazareth. Note, No distance, or disadvantage of place, shall be a prejudice to those whom God has favours in store for. The angel Gabriel carries his message as cheerfully to Mary at Nazareth in Galilee, as to Zacharias in the temple at Jerusalem.

Secondly, The *address* of the angel to her, ver. 28. We are not told what she was doing, or how employed, when the angel came *unto her*; but he surprized her with this salutation, *Hail, thou that art highly favoured*: this was intended to raise in her, (1.) A value for *herself*; and though it is very rare, that any need to have any sparks struck into their breast with such design, yet in some, who, like Mary, pore only upon their *low estate*, there is occasion for it. (2.) An expectation of great news not from abroad, but from above. Heaven designs, no doubt, uncommon favours for one whom an angel makes court to with such respect. *Hail thou, χαῖρε, rejoice thou*; it was the usual form of salutation; it expresseth an esteem of her, and good-will to her, and her prosperity.

1. She is dignified: thou art *highly favoured*; God in his choice of thee to be the mother of the Messiah, has put an honour upon thee, peculiar to thy self, above that of Eve, who was the mother of *all living*. The vulgar Latin translates this *gratia plena*, and from thence gathers, that she had more of the inherent graces of the Spirit than ever any had, whereas it is certain, this speaks no other than the singular favour done her, in preferring her to conceive and bear our blessed Lord; an honour, which since he was to be the *seed of the woman*, some woman must have, not for *personal merit*, but purely for the sake of *free grace*, and she is pitched upon; *even so Father because it seemed good unto thee*.

2. She has the presence of God with her; *The Lord is with thee*, though poor and mean, and perhaps now forecasting how

to get a livelihood, and maintain a family in the married state. The angel with this word raised the faith of Gideon, *Judg. vi. 12. The Lord is with thee*. Nothing is to be despaired of, not the performance of any service, not the obtaining of any favour, though never so great, if we have *God with us*. This word might put her in mind of the Immanuel, *God with us*, which a virgin shall *conceive*, and bear, *Isa. vii. 14.* and why not she?

3. She has the blessing of God upon her; *blest art thou among women*; not only thou shalt be accounted so by men, but thou shalt be so. Thou that art so *highly favoured* in this instance, mayest expect in other things to be *blest*: she explains this herself, ver. 48. *All generations shall call me blest*; compare it with that which Deborah saith of Jael, another that was the glory of her sex, *Judg. v. 24. Blest shall she be above women in the tent*.

Thirdly, The consternation she was in upon this address, ver. 29. *when she saw him*, and the glories with which he was surrounded, she was *troubled* at the sight of him, and much more *at his saying*. Had she been a proud, ambitious young woman, that aimed high, and flattered herself with the expectation of great things in the world, she would have been *pleased* at his saying, would have been puffed up with it, and (as we have reason to think she was a young woman of very good sense) would have had an answer ready, signifying so much: but instead of that she is *confounded* at it, as not conscious to herself of any thing that either *merited*, or *promised* any such great things: and she *cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be*; was it from heaven or of men, was it to amuse her, was it to ensnare her, was it to banter her, or was there something substantial and weighty in it? but of all the thoughts she had *what manner of salutation it should be*, I believe she had not the least idea of its being ever intended, or used for a prayer as it is, and has been for many ages, by the corrupt, degenerate, and antichristian ages of the church, and to be ten times repeated for the Lord's prayer once; so it is in the church of Rome. But, her thoughtfulness upon this occasion, gives a very useful intimation to young people of her sex, when addresses are made to them to consider, and *cast in their minds*, what manner of *salutations* they are; whence they come, and what their tendency is, that they may receive them accordingly, and may always *stand on their guard*.

Fourthly, The message itself which the angel had to deliver to her. Some time the angel gives her to *pause*; but observing that that did but increase her perplexity, he went on with his errand, ver. 30. To what he had said she made no reply, he therefore confirms it, *Fear not, Mary, I have no other design but to assure thee, that thou hast found favour with God* more than thou thinkest of, as there are many who think they are more favoured of God than really they are. Note, Those that have *found favour with God*, should not give way to disquieting, distrustful fears. Doth God favour thee? Fear not, though the world frown upon thee. Is he for thee? No matter who is against thee.

1. Though she is a *virgin*, she shall have the honour of being a *mother*; thou shalt *conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son*, and thou shalt have the naming of him, thou shalt *call his name Jesus*, ver. 31. It was the sentence upon Eve, that though she should have the honour to be the *mother of all living*, yet this mortification shall be an allay to that honour, that *her desire shall be to her husband*, and he shall rule over her, Gen. iii. 16. But Mary has the honour, without the allay.

2. Though she lives in *poverty*, and *obscurity*, yet she shall have the honour to be the mother of the Messiah; her Son shall be named Jesus, a Saviour, such a one as the world *needs*, rather than such a one as the Jews *expect*.

1. He will be very *nearly allied* to the *upper world*: He shall be *great*, truly great, incontestably great, for he shall be called *the Son of the Highest*, the Son of God, who is *the Highest*; of the same nature, as the son is of the same nature with the father; and very dear to him, as the son is to the father. He shall be *called*, and not *miscalled*, *the Son of the Highest*, for he is himself *God over all, blessed for evermore*, Rom. ix. 5. Note, Those who are the children of God, though but by adoption, and regeneration, are *truly great*, and therefore are concerned to be *very good*, 1 John iii. 1, 2.

2. He will be very *highly preferred* in the *lower world*; for though born under the most disadvantageous circumstances possible, and appearing in the form of a servant, yet *the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David*, ver. 32. He puts her in mind that she was *of the house of David*; and that therefore since neither the *Salique Law*, nor the right of primogeniture took place in the entail of his throne, it was not impossible but that she might bring forth an *heir* to it, and therefore might the more easily *believe it*, when she was told by an angel from heaven, that she *should* do so: that after the scepter had been long *departed* from that ancient and honourable family, it should now at length return to it again, to remain in it; not by succession, but in the same hand to eternity. His people will not *give him that throne*, will not acknowledge his right to *rule them*; but the *Lord God* shall give him a right to *rule them*, and set him as *his king* upon the *holy hill of Zion*. He assures her,

(r.) That



(1.) That his kingdom shall be *spiritual*; he shall reign over the house of Jacob, not Israel, according to the flesh, for they neither came into his interests, nor did they continue long a people; it must therefore be a *spiritual* kingdom, the house of Israel, according to promise, that he must rule over. (2.) That it shall be eternal: he shall reign for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end, as there had been long since of the temporal reign of David's house, and would shortly be of the state of Israel: other crowns endure not to every generation, but Christ's doth, *Prov. xxvii. 4.* The gospel is the last dispensation, we are to look for no other.

Fifthly, The further information given her, upon her enquiry concerning the birth of this prince.

1. It is a just enquiry which she makes, *how shall this be?* ver. 34. how can I now presently conceive a child, (for so the angel meant) when I know not a man; must it therefore be otherwise than by *ordinary generation*? If so, let me know *how*? she knew that the Messiah must be born of a *virgin*, and if she must be his mother, she desires to know how. This was not the language of her distrust, or any doubt of what the angel said, but of a desire to be further instructed.

2. It is a satisfactory answer that is given to it, ver. 35. (1.) She shall conceive by the power of the holy Ghost, whose proper work and office it is to *sanctify*; and therefore to sanctify the virgin for this purpose, the Holy Ghost is called the power of the Highest; doth she ask how this shall be? this is enough to help her over all the difficulty there appears in it; a divine power will undertake it, not the power of an angel employed in it, as in other works of wonder, but the power of the Holy Ghost himself.

(2.) She must ask no questions concerning the way and manner how it shall be wrought; for the Holy Ghost, as the power of the Highest, shall over-shadow her, as the cloud covered the tabernacle, when the glory of God took possession of it, to conceal it from those that would too curiously observe the motions of it, and pry into the mystery of it. The formation of every babe in the womb, and the entrance of the spirit of life into it, is a mystery in nature; none knows the way of the spirit, nor how the bones are formed in the womb of her that is with child, *Eccl. xi. 5.* We were made in secret, *Psal. cxxxix. 15, 16.* Much more was the formation of the child Jesus a mystery; without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, *1 Tim. iii. 16.* It is a new thing created in the earth, *Jer. xxxi. 22.* concerning which, we must not covet to be wise above what is written.

(3.) The child she shall conceive is a holy thing, and therefore must not be conceived by *ordinary generation*, because he must not share in the common corruption, and pollution of the human nature; he is spoken of emphatically, *That Holy Thing*, such as never was: and he shall be called the Son of God, as the Son of the Father by eternal generation, and as an indication of that, he shall now be formed by the Holy Ghost in the present conception. His human nature must be so produced, as it was fit that should be, which was to be taken into union with the divine nature.

3. It was a further encouragement to her faith, to be told that her cousin Elisabeth, though stricken in years, was with child, ver. 36. Here is an age of wonders beginning, and therefore be not surprized: here is one among thy own relations truly great, though not altogether so great as this; it is usual with God to advance in working wonders. Greater works than these shall ye do. Though Elisabeth was on the father's side, of the daughters of Aaron, ver. 5. yet on the mother's side, she might be of the house of David, for those two families often intermarried, as an earnest of the uniting of the royalty, and the priesthood in the Messiah. This is the sixth month with her that was called barren: this intimates, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, that all the instances in the Old Testament, of those having children that had been long barren, which was above nature, were designed to prepare the world for the belief of a virgin's bearing a son, which was against nature. And therefore, even in the birth of Isaac, Abraham saw Christ's day, foresaw such a miracle in the birth of Christ: the angel assures Mary of this, to encourage her faith, and concludes with that great truth of undoubted certainty and universal use, for with God nothing shall be impossible, ver. 37. and if nothing, then not this. Abraham therefore staggered not at the belief of the divine promise, because he was strong in his belief of the divine power, *Rom. iv. 20, 21.* No word of God must be incredible to us, as long as no work of God is impossible to him.

Sixthly, Her acquiescence in the will of God concerning her, ver. 38. she owns herself, 1. A believing subject to the divine authority. Behold the hand-maid of the Lord; Lord I am at thy service, at thy dispose, to do what thou commandest me. She objects not the danger of spoiling her marriage, and blemishing her reputation, but leaves the issue with God, and submits entirely to his will. 2. A believing expectant of the divine favour. She is not only content it should be so, but humbly desires it may be so; be it unto me according to thy word: such a favour as this, it was not for her to slight, or be indifferent to; and for what God has promised, he will be sought unto; by prayer we must put our

amen, or so be it, to the promise. Remember, and perform the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. We must, as Mary here, guide our desires by the word of God and ground our hopes upon it. Be it unto me according to thy word; just so, and no otherwise.

Hereupon the angel departed from her; having compleated the errand he was sent upon, returned to give account of it, and receive new instructions. Converse with angels was always a transient thing, and soon over, it will be constant and permanent in the future state. And it is generally supposed, that just at this instant the virgin conceived, by the over-shadowing power of the Holy Ghost: but the scripture being decently silent concerning that it doth not become us to be inquisitive, much less positive.

39. And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Juda, 40. And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. 41. And it came to pass, that when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb: and Elisabeth was filled with the holy Ghost, 42. And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 43. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44. For lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. 46. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord; 47. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. 48. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. 49. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things, and holy is his name. 50. And his mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation. 51. He hath shewed strength with his arm, he hath scattered the proud, in the imagination of their hearts. 52. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. 53. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. 54. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55. As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever. 56. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

We have here an interview between the two happy mothers, Elisabeth and Mary: the angel by intimating to Mary the favour bestowed on her cousin Elisabeth, ver. 36. gave occasion for it; and sometimes it may prove a better piece of service than we think, to bring good people together, to compare notes. Here is,

First, The visit which Mary made to Elisabeth; Mary was the younger, and younger with child; and therefore, if they must come together, it was fittest that Mary should take the journey, not insisting on the preference which the greater dignity of her conception gave her, ver. 39. She arose, and left her affairs, to attend this greater matter: in those days, i. e. at that time, (as it is commonly explained, *Jer. xxxiii. 15.*—l. 4.) in a day or two after the angel had visited her, taking some time first, as it is supposed, for her devotion, or rather, hastening away to her cousin's where she would have more leisure, and better help in the family of a priest. She went, *μετὰ σπουδῆς*, with care and diligence, and expedition; not as young people commonly go abroad, and visit their friends, to divert herself, but to inform herself: she went to a city of Judah in the hill-country, it is not named: but by comparing the description of it here with *Josh. xxi. 10, 11.* it appears to be Hebron, for that is there said to be in the hill-country of Judah, and to belong to the priests the sons of Aaron: thither Mary hastened, though it was a long journey, some scores of miles.

1. Dr. Lightfoot offers a conjecture, that she was to conceive of our Saviour there at Hebron, and perhaps had so much intimated to her by the angel, or some other way; and therefore she made such haste thither. He thinks it probable, that Shiloh of the tribe of Judah, and the seed of David, should be conceived in a city of Judah and of David, as he was to be born in Bethlehem, another city which belonged to them both. In Hebron the promise was given of Isaac, circumcision was instituted: here (saith he) Abraham had his first land, and David his first crown: here lay interred the three couple, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah, and, as antiquity has held, Adam and Eve: he therefore thinks it suits singularly with the harmony and consent which God useth in his works, that the promise



promise should begin to take place by the conception of the Messias, even among those patriarchs to whom it was given. I see no improbability in the conjecture, but add this for the support of it, that Elisabeth said, *ver. 45. There shall be a performance; as if it were not performed yet, but was to be performed there.*

2. It is generally supposed, that she went thither for the confirming of her faith, by the sign which the angel had given her, her cousin's being with child; and to rejoice with her sister favourite. And besides, she went thither, perhaps, that she might be more retired from company, or else might have more agreeable company than she could have in Nazareth. We may suppose she did not acquaint any of her neighbours at Nazareth, with the message she had received from heaven, yet longed to *talk over* a thing, she had a thousand times *thought over*, and knew no person in the world, with whom she could *freely* converse concerning it, but her cousin Elisabeth, and therefore she hastened to her. Note, It is very beneficial, and comfortable, for those that have a good work of grace begun in their souls, and Christ in the *forming* there, to consult those who are *in the same case*, that they may communicate experiences one to another; and they will find that, as in water, face answers to face, so doth the heart of man to man, of Christian to Christian.

Secondly, The meeting between Mary and Elisabeth; Mary entered into the house of Zacharias, but he being *dumb*, and *deaf*, it is likely he kept his chamber, and saw no company, and therefore she *saluted Elisabeth*, *ver. 90.* told her she was come to make her a visit, to know her state, and *rejoice with her* in her joy.

Now at their first coming together, for the confirmation of the faith of both them, there was something very extraordinary: Mary knew that Elisabeth was with child, but it doth not appear, that Elisabeth had been told any thing of her cousin Mary's being designed for the mother of the Messiah; and therefore, what knowledge she appears to have had of it, must come by a *revelation*, which would be a great encouragement to Mary.

1. The babe *leaped in her womb*. It is very probable she had been several weeks *quick*, for she was six months gone, and that she had often felt the child stir; but this was a more than ordinary motion of the child, and which alarmed her to expect something very extraordinary, *ἐκρίστος*. It is the same word that is used by the LXX. *Gen. xxv. 22.* for the *struggling* of Jacob and Esau, in Rebecca's womb, and the mountains *skipping*, *Psal. cxiv. 4.* The babe *leaped*, as it were to give a signal to his mother, that he was now at hand, whose fore-runner he was to be, about six months in ministry, as he was in being; or, it was the effect of some strong impression made upon the mother. Now began to be fulfilled what the angel said to his father, *ver. 15.* That he should be *filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb*; and perhaps he himself had some reference to this, when he said, *John iii. 29.* The friend of the bridegroom *rejoiceth greatly, because of the bridegroom's voice heard*, though not by him, yet by his mother.

2. Elisabeth was herself *filled with the Holy Ghost*, or a Spirit of prophecy; by which, as well as by the particular suggestions of the Holy Ghost she was filled with, she was given to understand, that the Messiah was at hand, in whom prophecy should revive, and by whom the Holy Ghost should be more plentifully poured out than ever, according to the expectations of those, who *waited for the consolation of Israel*. The uncommon motion of the babe in her womb, was a token of the extraordinary emotion of her spirit, under a divine impulse. Note, Those whom Christ graciously visits, may know it by their being *filled with the Holy Ghost*, for *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*.

Thirdly, The welcome which Elisabeth, by the Spirit of prophecy, gave to Mary the mother of our Lord; not as to a common friend, making a common visit, but as to one of whom the Messiah was to be born.

1. She *congratulates* her honour, and though perhaps she knew not of it till *just now*, she acknowledgeth it with the greatest assurance and satisfaction. She *speaks with a loud voice*, which doth not at all intimate (as some think) that there was a floor or a wall between them; but that she was in a transport, or exultation of joy, and said, What, she cared not who knew. And this she said, *Blessed art thou among women*, the same word that the angel had said, *ver. 28.* for thus this will of God, concerning honouring the Son, should be done *on earth*, as it is *done in heaven*. But Elisabeth adds a reason, therefore *Blessed art thou*, because *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb*, thence it was that she derived this excellent dignity. Elisabeth was the wife of a priest, and in years, yet she *grudgeth* not that her kinswoman, who was many years younger than she, and every way her inferior, should have the honour of conceiving in her virginity, and being the mother of the Messiah; whereas the honour put upon her was *much less*; but *rejoiceth* in it, and is well pleased, as her Son was afterwards, that she that *cometh after her*, is *preferred before her*, *John i. 27.* Note, While we cannot but own that we are more *favoured* of God than we *deserve*, let us by no means *envy*, that others are more *highly* favoured than we are.

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2. She *acknowledgeth her condescension*, in making her this visit, *ver. 43. Whence is this to me; that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* Observe, (1.) She calls the virgin Mary, the *mother of her Lord*, for David, in spirit, called the Messiah Lord; *his Lord*; for she knew he was to be *Lord of all*. (2.) She not only bids her welcome to her house, though perhaps she came but in mean circumstances, but reckons this visit a great favour, which she thought herself unworthy of. *Whence is this to me?* It is in reality, and not in compliment, that she saith, this was a greater favour than she could have expected. Note, Those that are filled with the Holy Ghost, have *low thoughts* of their own merits, and high thoughts of God's favours. Her son, the Baptist, spoke to the same purpose with this; when he said, *Comest thou to me?* *Matt. iii. 14.*

3. She acquaints her with the concurrence of the babe in her womb, in this welcome to her, *ver. 44.* Thou certainly bringest some extraordinary tidings, some extraordinary blessing, with thee, for *as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears*, not only my heart *leaped for joy*, though I knew not immediately; why, or wherefore, but the *babe in my womb*, who was not capable of knowing it, *did so* too. He *leaped*, as it were, *for joy*, that the Messiah, whose harbinger he was to be, would himself come so soon after him. This would serve very much to strengthen the faith of the virgin, that there were such assurances as these given to others; and it would be in part, the accomplishment of what had been so often foretold, that there should be an *universal joy before the Lord, when he cometh*, *Psal. cxviii. 8, 9.*

4. She commends her faith, and encourageth it, *ver. 45. Blessed is she that believed*, believing souls are blessed souls, and will be found so at last; this blessedness cometh *through faith*, even the blessedness of being related to Christ, and having him *formed in the soul*. They are *blessed*, who *believe* the word of God, for that word will not fail them; *there shall*, without doubt, *be a performance of those things, which are told her from the Lord*. Note, The inviolable certainty of the promise is the undoubted felicity of those that build upon it, and expect their all from it. The faithfulness of God is the blessedness of the faith of the saints. Those that have experienced the performance of God's promises themselves, should encourage others to hope, that he will be as good as his word to them also; *I will tell you what God has done for my soul*.

Fourthly, Mary's song of praise upon this occasion. Elisabeth's prophecy, was an echo to the virgin Mary's salutation, and this song is yet a stronger *echo* to that prophecy, and shews her to be no less filled with the Holy Ghost, than Elisabeth was. We may suppose the blessed virgin to come in, very much *fatigued* with her journey, yet she forgets that, and is inspired with new life, and vigour, and joy, upon the confirmation she here meets with, of her faith; and since, by this sudden inspiration and transport, she finds that this was designed to be her errand hither, as weary as she is, like Abraham's servant, she would *neither eat nor drink, till she had told her errand*.

1. Here are the expressions of joy, and praise, and God alone, the object of the praise, and centre of the joy. Some compare this song, with that which her name-sake Miriam, the sister of Moses, sung, upon the triumphant departure of Israel out of Egypt, and their triumphant passage through the Red-sea; others think it better compared with the song of Hannah, upon the birth of Samuel, which, like this, passeth from a family mercy, to a publick and general one. *This begins like that, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord*, *1 Sam. ii. 1.* Observe how Mary here speaks of God,

1. With great reverence of him, as *the Lord*. *My soul doth magnify the Lord*; I never saw him so *great*, as now I find him so *good*. Note, Those, and those only, are *advanced* in mercy, who are thereby brought to think the more *highly* and *honourably* of God; whereas there are those, whose prosperity and preferment makes them say, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?* The more honour God has any way put upon us, the more honour we must study to give to him: And then only are we accepted, in magnifying the Lord, when our *souls* magnify him, and *all that is within us*. Praising-work must be soul-work.

2. With great complacency in him, as *her Saviour*. *My spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour*. This seems to have reference to the Messiah, whom she was to be the mother of; she calls him *God her Saviour*, for the angel had told her, that he should be the *Son of the Highest*, and that his name should be Jesus, a Saviour; this she fastened upon, with application to herself, he is *God my Saviour*. Even the mother of our Lord, had need of an interest in him, as her Saviour, and would have been undone without it. And she glories more in that happiness, which she had in common with all believers, than in being his mother, which was an honour peculiar to herself; which agrees with the preference Christ gave to obedient believers, above his mother and brethren, see *Matt. xii. 50.* *Luke xi. 27, 28.* Note, Those that have Christ for their God and Saviour, have a great deal of reason to rejoice, to *rejoice in spirit*, that is, rejoicing as Christ did, *Luke x. 21.* with spiritual joy.

2. Here are just causes assigned for this joy and praise. 1. Upon *her own* account, *ver. 48, 49.* (1.) Her *spirit rejoiceth in the Lord*, because of the *kind things* he had done for her; his *condescension*



scension and compassion to her; he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden, i. e. he has looked upon her with pity, for so the word is commonly used. He has chosen me to this honour, notwithstanding my great meanness, poverty, and obscurity; nay, the expression seems to intimate, not only (to allude to that of Gideon, *Judg. vi. 12.*) that her family was poor in Judah, but that she was the *least in her father's house*, as if she were under some particular contempt and disgrace among her relations, was unjustly neglected, and the outcast of the family, and God put this honour upon her, to balance abundantly that contempt. I the rather suggest this, for we find something toward such honour as this put upon others, on the like consideration. Because God saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, *Gen. xxix. 31.* Because Hannah was provoked and made to fret, and insulted over by Peninnah, therefore God gave her a son, *1 Sam. i. 19.* Whom men wrongfully deprecate, and despise, God sometimes, in compassion towards them, especially if they have borne it patiently, doth prefer and advance; see *Judg. xi. 7.* So in Mary's case. And if God regard her low estate, he not only thereby gives a specimen of his favour to the whole race of mankind, whom he remembers in their low estate, as the psalmist speaks, *Psal. cxxxvi. 23.* but secures a lasting honour to her (for such the honour is that God bestows, honour that fades not away) from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, i. e. shall think me a happy woman, and highly advanced. All that embrace Christ and his gospel will say, *Blessed was the womb that bore him, and the paps which he sucked*, *Luke xi. 27.* Elisabeth had once and again called her blessed, but that is not all, faith she, all generations, of Gentiles as well as Jews, shall call me so. (2.) Her soul magnifies the Lord, because of the wonderful things he has done for her, *ver. 49.* He that is mighty has done to me great things. A great thing indeed, that a virgin should conceive. A great thing indeed, that Messiah, who had been so long ago promised to the church, and so long expected by the church, should now at length be born. It is the power of the Highest that appears in this. She adds, *and holy is his name*; for so Hannah faith in her song, *There is none holy as the Lord*, which she explains in the next words, *for there is none beside thee*, *1 Sam. ii. 2.* God is a being by himself, and he manifests himself to be so, especially in the work of our redemption. He that is mighty, even he whose name is holy, has done to me great things. Glorious things may be expected from him that is both mighty and holy; who can do every thing, and will do every thing, well, and for the best.

2. Upon the account of others. The virgin Mary, as the mother of the Messiah, is become a kind of publick person, wears a publick character, and is therefore presently endued with another spirit, a more publick spirit, than before she had, and therefore looks abroad, looks about her, looks before her, and takes notice of God's various dealings with the children of men, *ver. 50, &c.* as Hannah, *1 Sam. ii. 3.* and in this she has, especially, an eye to the coming of the Redeemer, and God's manifesting himself therein.

1. It is a certain truth, that God has mercy in store, mercy in reserve, for all that have a reverence for his majesty, and a due regard to his sovereignty and authority: But never did this appear so, as in sending his Son into the world to save us, *ver. 50.* His mercy is on them that fear him, it has always been so, he has ever looked upon them with an eye of peculiar favour, who have looked up to him with an eye of filial fear. But he hath manifested this mercy, so as never before, in sending his Son to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and work out an everlasting salvation for them that fear him; and this from generation to generation, for there are gospel-privileges, transmitted by entail, and intended for perpetuity. Those that fear God, as their Creator and Judge, are encouraged to hope for mercy in him, through their Mediator and Advocate; and in him mercy is settled upon all that fear God, pardoning mercy, healing mercy, accepting mercy, crowning mercy, from generation to generation, while the world stands. In Christ he keepeth mercy for thousands.

2. It has been a common observation, That God, in his providence, doth put contempt upon the haughty, and honour upon the humble, and this he has done remarkably, in the whole oeconomy of the work of man's redemption. As God had, with his mercy, to her shewed himself mighty also, *ver. 48, 49.* so he had, with his mercy, on them that fear him, shewed strength likewise with his arm. (1.) In the course of his providence, it is his usual method, to cross the expectations of men, and proceed quite otherwise than they promise themselves. Proud men expect to carry all before them, to have their way, and have their will, but he scatters them in the imagination of their hearts; breaks their measures, blasts their projects, nay, and brings them low, and brings them down, by those very counsels, with which they thought to advance and establish themselves. The mighty think to secure themselves by might in their seats, but he puts them down, and overturns their seats; while, on the other hand, those of low degree, who despaired of ever advancing themselves, and thought of no other, but of being ever low, are wonderfully exalted. And this observation concerning honour, holds likewise concerning riches; many that were so poor, that they had not bread for themselves and their families, by some surprizing turn of providence, in

favour of them, come to be filled with good things; while, on the other hand, those that were rich, and thought no other, but that tomorrow should be as this day, that their mountain stood strong, and should never be moved, are strangely impoverished, and sent away empty. Now this is the same observation that Hannah had made, and enlarged upon in her song, with application to the case of herself and her adversary, *1 Sam. ii. 4, 5, 6, 7.* which very much illustrates this here. And compare also, *Psal. cxvii. 33—41.* and *Psal. cxiii. 7, 8, 9.* and *Eccl. ix. 11.* God takes a pleasure in disappointing their expectations, that promise themselves great things in the world, and in out-doing the expectations of those that promise themselves but a little; as a righteous God, it is his glory to abase those that exalt themselves, and strike terror on the secure; and, as a good God, it is his glory to exalt those that humble themselves, and to speak comfort to those that fear before him. (2.) This doth, especially, appear in the methods of gospel-grace.

(1.) In the spiritual honours it dispenseth. When the proud Pharisees were rejected, and Publicans and sinners went into the kingdom of heaven before them; when the Jews, that followed after the law of righteousness, did not attain it, and the Gentiles, that never thought of it, attained to righteousness, *Rom. ix. 30, 31.* When God chose not the wise men after the flesh, not the mighty or the noble, to preach the gospel, and plant Christianity in the world, but the foolish and weak things of the world, and things that were despised, *1 Cor. i. 26, 27.* then he scattered the proud, and put down the mighty, but exalted them of low degree. When the tyranny of the chief priests and elders was brought down, who had long lorded it over God's heritage, and hoped always to do so; and Christ's disciples, a company of poor despised fishermen, by the power they were clothed with, were made to sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; when the power of the four monarchies was broken, and the kingdom of the Messiah, that stone cut out of the mountain without hands, is made to fill the earth; then are the proud scattered, and those of low degree exalted.

(2.) In the spiritual riches it dispenseth, *ver. 53.* (1.) Those that see their need of Christ, and are importunately desirous of righteousness and life in him, he fills those with good things, with the best things, he gives liberally to them, and they are abundantly satisfied with the blessings he gives. They that are weary and heavy laden, shall find rest with Christ, and those that thirst, are called to come to him and drink; for they only know how to value his gifts; to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet, manna is angels food, and to the thirsty fair water is honey out of the rock. (2.) Those who are rich, who are not hungry, who, like Laodicea, think they have need of nothing, are full of themselves, and their own righteousness, and think they have a sufficiency in themselves, those he sends away from his door, they are not welcome to him, he sends them empty away, they come full of self, and are sent away empty of Christ. He sends them to the gods whom they served, to their own righteousness and strength which they trusted to.

3. It was always expected, that the Messiah should be, in a special manner, the strength and glory of his people Israel, and so he is, in a peculiar manner, *ver. 54.* He hath holpen his servant Israel, ἀντελάβετο. He hath taken them by the hand, and helped them up that were fallen, and could not help themselves. Those that were sunk under the burthens of a broken covenant of innocency, are helped up by the blessings of a renewed covenant of grace. The sending of the Messiah, on whom help was laid for poor sinners, was the greatest kindness that could be done, the greatest help that could be provided, for his people Israel; and that which magnifies it is,

1. That it is in remembrance of his mercy; the mercifulness of his nature, the mercy he has in store for his servant Israel. While this blessing was deferred, his people, who waited for it, were often ready to ask, *Has God forgotten to be gracious?* But now he made it appear, that he had not forgot, but remembered his mercy. He remembered his former mercy, and repeated that to them in spiritual blessings, which he had done formerly to them in temporal favours. He remembered the days of old; where is he that brought them out of the sea; out of Egypt? *Isa. lxiii. 11.* and therefore he will do the like again; which that was a type of,

2. That it is in performance of his promise; it is a mercy not only designed, but declared, *ver. 55.* it was what he spake to our fathers, that the seed of the woman, should break the head of the serpent; that God should dwell in the tents of Shem: And particularly to Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed, with the best of blessings, with the blessings that are for ever, and to the seed that shall be for ever, that is, his spiritual seed, for his carnal seed were cut off; a little after this. Note, What God hath spoken, he will perform; what he hath spoken to the fathers, will be performed to their seed; to their seed's seed; in blessings that shall last for ever.

Lastly, Mary's return to Nazareth, *ver. 56.* after she had continued with Elisabeth about three months; so long as to be fully satisfied concerning herself, that she was with child, and to be confirmed therein by her cousin Elisabeth. Some think, though her return is here mentioned, before Elisabeth's being delivered, because



because the evangelist would finish this passage concerning Mary, before he proceeded with the story of Elisabeth, yet that Mary stayed till her cousin was (as we say) *down and up again*; that she might attend on her, and be with her in her lying-in, and have her own faith confirmed by the full accomplishment of the promise of God concerning Elisabeth. But most bind themselves to the order of the story as it lies, and think she returned again when Elisabeth was near her time, because she still affected retirement, and therefore would not be there, when the birth of this child of promise would draw a great deal of company to the house. Those, in whose hearts Christ is formed, take more delight than they used to do, in *sitting alone, and keeping silence*.

57. Now Elisabeth's full time came, that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. 58. And her neighbours, and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. 59. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. 60. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. 61. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. 62. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. 63. And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. 64. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. 65. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill-country of Judea. 66. And all they that had heard them, laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.

In these verses we have,

1. The birth of John Baptist, *ver. 57*. Though he was conceived in the womb by miracle, he continued in the womb according to the ordinary course of nature. So did our Saviour. *Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered*, and then she brought forth a son. Promised mercies are to be expected, when the full time for them is come, and not before.

2. The great joy that was among all the relations of the family, upon this extraordinary occasion, *ver. 58*. *Her neighbours and her cousins heard of it*, for it would be in every body's mouth, as next to miraculous: Dr. Lightfoot observes, that Hebron was inhabited by priests of the family of Aaron, and those were the cousins here spoken of; but the fields and villages about, by the children of Judah, and those were the neighbours. Now these here discovered, (1.) A pious regard to God; they acknowledge that the Lord had magnified his mercy to her, so the word is. It was a mercy to have her reproach taken away, a mercy to have her family built up, and the more being a family of priests, devoted to God, and employed for him. Many things concurred to make the mercy great, that she had been long barren, was now old, but especially that the child should be great in the sight of the Lord. (2.) A friendly regard to Elisabeth; when she rejoiced, they rejoiced with her. We ought to take pleasure in the prosperity of our neighbours and friends, and to be thankful to God for their comforts, as for our own.

3. The dispute that was among them concerning the naming him, *ver. 59*. On the eighth day, as God had appointed, they came together to circumcise the child; and it was here in Hebron, that circumcision was first instituted, and Isaac, who, like John Baptist, was born by promise, was one of the first that was submitted to it, at least the chief-eyed in the institution of it. They that rejoiced in the birth of the child, came together to the circumcising of him. Note, The greatest comfort we can take in our children, is in giving them up to God, and recognizing their covenant relation to him. The baptism of our children should be more our joy than their birth.

Now it was the custom when they circumcised their children, to name them; because when Abram was circumcised, God gave him a new name, and called him Abraham; and it is not unfit that they should be left nameless, till they are by name given up to God. Now,

1. Some proposed that he should be called by his father's name, Zacharias; of which we have not any instance in scripture, that the child should bear the father's name; but perhaps it was of late come into use among the Jews, as it is with us; and they intended hereby to do honour to the father, who was not likely to have another child.

2. The mother opposed it, and would have him called John; having learned either by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, (as is most probable) or by information in writing from her husband, that God appointed that should be his name, *ver. 60*. *He shall be called Johanan, gracious*; because he shall introduce the

gospel of Christ, wherein God's grace shines more bright than ever.

3. The relations objected against that, *ver. 61*. *There is none of thy kindred*, none of the relations of thy family that is called by that name; and therefore, if he may not have his father's name, yet let him have the name of some of his kindred, that will take it as a piece of respect to have such a child of wonders as this named from them. Note, As those that have friends must shew themselves friendly, so those that have relations must be obliging to them, in all the usual regards that are paid to kindred.

4. They appealed to the father, and would try if they could possibly get to know his mind, for it was his office to name the child, *ver. 62*. They made signs to him, by which it appears he was deaf, as well as dumb; nay, it should seem, mindless of any thing, else one would think they should at first have desired him to write down his child's name, if he had ever yet communicated any thing by writing since he was struck. However, they would carry the matter as far as they could, and give him to understand what the dispute was, which he only could determine; whereupon he made signs to them to give him a table-book, such as they then used; and with the pencil he wrote these words, *His name is John*, *ver. 63*. Not, it shall be so, or I would have it so, but it is so; the matter is determined already; the angel had given him that name. Observe, When Zacharias could not speak, he wrote. When ministers have their mouths stopped, that they cannot preach, yet they may be doing good, as long as they have not their hands tied, that they cannot write. Many of the martyrs in prison wrote letters to their friends, which were of great use; blessed Paul himself did so. Zacharias's pitching upon the same name that Elisabeth had chosen, was a great surprize to the company, they marvelled all; for they knew not, that though by reason of his deafness and dumbness they could not converse together, yet they were both guided by one and the same Spirit: Or, perhaps they marvelled that he wrote so distinctly, and intelligently, which (the stroke he was under being somewhat like that of a palsy) he had not done before.

5. He thereupon recovered the use of his speech, *ver. 64*. *His mouth was opened immediately*. The time prefixed for his being silenced, was, till the day that these things shall be fulfilled, *ver. 20*. not all the things going before concerning John's ministry, but those which relate to his birth and name, *ver. 13*. and that time was now expired, whereupon the restraint was taken off, and God gave him the opening of the mouth again, as he did to Ezekiel, *chap. iii. 27*. Dr. Lightfoot compares this case of Zacharias with that of Moses, *Exod. iv. 24, 26*. Moses for distrust is in danger of his life, as Zacharias for the same fault is struck dumb; but upon the circumcising of his child, and recovery of his faith, there, as here, the danger is removed. Infidelity closed his mouth, and now believing opens it again; he believes, therefore he speaks: David lay under guilt from the conception of his child, till a few days after its birth; then the Lord takes away his sin; upon his repentance, he shall not die, so here he shall be no longer dumb; his mouth was opened, and he spake, and praised God. Note, When God opens our lips, our mouths must shew forth his praise; as good be without our speech, as not use it in praising God, for then our tongue is most our glory, when it is employed for God's glory.

6. These things were told all the country over, to the great amazement of all that heard them, *ver. 65, 66*. The sentiments of the people are not to be slighted, but taken notice of. We are here told, (1.) That these sayings were discoursed of, and were the common talk all about the hill-country of Judea, and it was pity but a narrative of them had been drawn up, and published in the world immediately. (2.) That most people who heard of these things, were put into a consternation by them; Fear came on all them that dwelt round about there. If we have not a good hope, as we ought to have, built upon the gospel, we may expect that the tidings of it will fill us with fear. They believed and trembled, whereas they should have believed and triumphed. (3.) It raised the expectations of people concerning this child, and obliged them to have their eye upon him, to see what he would come to. They laid up these presages in their hearts, treasured them up in mind and memory, as foreseeing they should hereafter have occasion to recollect them. Note, What we hear that may be of use to us, we should treasure up, that we may be able to bring forth, for the benefit of others, things new and old; and when things come to perfection, may be able to look back upon the presages of it, and to say, it was what we might expect. They said within themselves, and said among themselves, *What manner of child shall this be?* What will be the fruit, when these are the buds; or rather, when the root is out of such a dry ground? Note, When children are born into the world, it is very uncertain what they will prove; yet sometimes, there have been early indications of something great, as in the birth of Moses, Samson, Samuel, and here of John. And we have reason to think, that there were some of those living at the time when John began his publick ministry, who could, and did remember these things, and relate them to others, which contributed as much as any thing to the great flocking there was after him.

Lastly,



Lastly, It is said, *the hand of the Lord was with him*, i. e. He was taken under the special protection of the Almighty from his birth, as one designed for something great and considerable, and there were many instances of it. It appeared likewise, that the Spirit was at work upon his soul very early: As soon as he began to speak, or go, you might perceive something in him very extraordinary. Note, God has ways of operating upon children in their infancy, which we cannot account for. God never made a soul, but he knew how to sanctify it.

67. And his father Zacharias was filled with the holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, 68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69. And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David; 70. As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began; 71. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us. 72. To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant: 73. The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, 74. That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75. In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. 76. And thou child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways; 77. To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, 78. Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, 79. To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. 80. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

We have here the song wherewith Zacharias praised God when his mouth was opened, in it he is said to prophesy, ver. 67. and so he did, in the strictest sense of prophesying, for he foretold things to come concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, to which all the prophets are witnesses. Observe,

1. How he was qualified for this: He was filled with the Holy Ghost, was endued with more than ordinary measures and degrees of it for this purpose. He was divinely inspired. God not only forgave him his unbelief and distrust, which was signified by discharging of him from the punishment of it, but as a specimen of the abounding of grace towards believers, he filled him with the Holy Ghost, and put this honour upon him, to employ him for his honour.

2. What the matter of his song was. Here is nothing said of the private concerns of his own family, the rolling away the reproach from it, and putting of a reputation upon it by the birth of this child, though, no doubt, he found a time to give thanks to God for this, with his family: But, in this song, he is wholly taken up with the kingdom of the Messiah, and the publick blessings to be introduced by it: He could have little pleasure in this fruitfulness of his vine, and the hopefulness of his olive plant, if herein he had not foreseen the good of Jerusalem, peace upon Israel, and blessings on both out of Zion, Psal. cxxi. 3, 5, 6. The Old Testament prophecies are expressed many times in praises and new songs, so is this beginning of New Testament prophecy, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. The God of the whole earth shall be called*; yet, Zacharias, speaking of the work of redemption, called him the Lord God of Israel, because to Israel the prophecies, promises, and types of the redemption had hitherto been given, and to them the first offers and proposals of it were now to be made. Israel, as a chosen people, was a type of the elect of God out of all nations, whom God had a particular eye to, in sending the Saviour; and therefore he is therein called the Lord God of Israel.

Now Zacharias here blesteth God,

1. For the work of salvation that was to be wrought out by the Messiah himself, ver. 68—75. This it is that fills him, when he is filled with the Holy Ghost, and it is that which all that have the Spirit of Christ are full of.

1. In sending the Messiah, God has made a gracious visit to his people, whom for many ages he had seemed to neglect, and to be estranged from; he hath visited them, as a friend, to take cognizance of their case. God is said to have visited his people in bondage, when he delivered them, Exod. iii. 16.—iv. 31. to have visited his people in famine, when he gave them bread, Ruth i. 6. He had often sent to them by his prophets, and had still kept up a correspondence with them, but now he himself made them a visit.

2. He has wrought out a redemption for them; he hath redeemed his people: This was the errand on which Christ came into the

world, to redeem those that were sold for sin, and sold under sin; even God's own people, his Israel, his Son, his first-born his free-born need to be redeemed, and are undone if they be not. Christ redeems them by price out of the hands of God's justice, and redeems them by power out of the hands of Satan's tyranny as Israel out of Egypt.

3. He has fulfilled the covenant of royalty made with the most famous Old Testament prince, that was David: Glorious thing had been said of his family, that on him, as a mighty one, he should be laid, that his horn should be exalted, and his seed perpetuated, Psal. lxxxix. 19, 20, 24, 29. But that family has been long in a manner cast off and abhorred, Psal. lxxxix. 38. Now here it is gloried in, that according to the promise, the horn of David should again be made to bud, for, Psal. cxxxii. 27. He hath raised up a horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David, ver. 69. there, where it was promised, and expected to arise. David is called God's servant, not only as a good man, but as a king that ruled for God: And he was an instrument of the salvation of Israel, by being employed in the government of Israel, so Christ is the author of eternal redemption to those only that obey him. There is in Christ, and in him only, salvation for us, and it is a horn of salvation; for, (1.) It is an honourable salvation, it is raised up above all other salvations, none of which are to be compared with it: In it the glory both of the Redeemer, and of the redeemed, are advanced, and their horn exalted with honour. (2.) It is a plentiful salvation; it is a cornucopia, a horn of plenty, a salvation in which we are blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly things abundantly. (3.) It is a powerful salvation, the strength of the beast is in his horn; he has raised up such a salvation as shall pull down our spiritual enemies, and protect us from them. In the chariots of this salvation the Redeemer shall go forth, and go on conquering, and to conquer.

4. He hath fulfilled all the precious promises made to the church by the most famous Old Testament prophets, ver. 70. As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets. His doctrine of salvation by the Messiah is confirmed by an appeal to the prophets, and the greatness and importance of that salvation thereby evidenced and magnified; it is the same they spoke of, which therefore ought to be expected and welcomed: It is what they enquired and searched diligently after, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. and therefore ought not to be slighted, or thought meanly of. God is now doing that which he has long ago spoken of, and therefore be silent, O all flesh, before him, and attend to him. See, (1.) How sacred the prophecies of this salvation were; the prophets who delivered them were holy prophets, who durst not deceive, and who aimed at promoting holiness among men; and it was the holy God himself that spake by them. (2.) How antient they were; ever since the world began; God having promised when the world began, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head; that promise was echoed to when Adam called his wife's name Eve, life, for the sake of that seed of her's: When Eve called her first son Cain, saying, I have gotten a man from the Lord; and another son, Seth, settled; when Noah was called rest, and foretold that God should dwell in the tents of Shem. And it was not long after the new world began in Noah, that the promise was made to Abraham, that in his seed the nations of the earth should be blessed. (3.) What a wonderful harmony and concert there was among them; God spake the same thing by them all, and therefore it is said to be *δὴ ὁμοῦ*, not by the mouths, but by the mouth of the prophets, for they all spake of Christ as it were with one mouth.

Now what was this salvation which was prophesied of?

1. It is a rescue from the malice of our enemies. It is *σωτηρίαν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν ἡμῶν*, a salvation out of our enemies, from among them, and out of the power of them that hate us, ver. 71. It is a salvation from sin, and the dominion of Satan over us, both by corruptions within, and temptations without. The carnal Jews expected to be delivered from under the Roman yoke, but intimation was betimes given, that it should be a redemption of another nature: He shall save his people from their sins, that they may not have dominion over them, Matt. i. 21.

2. It is a restoration to the favour of God, it is to perform the mercy promised to our forefathers, ver. 72. The Redeemer shall not only break the serpent's head, that was the author of our ruin, but he shall re-instate us in the mercy of God, and re-establish us in his covenant; he shall bring us as it were into a paradise again, which was signified by the promises made to the patriarchs, and the holy covenant made with them; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, ver. 73. Observe, (1.) That which was promised to the fathers, and is performed to us, is mercy, pure mercy, nothing in it is owing to our merit, we deserve wrath, and the curse, but all to the mercy of God which designed us grace and life; *ex mero motu*, he loved us because he would love us. (2.) God herein had an eye to his covenant, his holy covenant; that covenant with Abraham; I will be a God to thee and thy seed. This his seed had really forfeited by their transgressions, this he seemed to have forgotten in the calamities brought upon them, but he will now remember it, will make it appear that he remembers it, for upon that is grounded all his returns of mercy, Lev. xxvi. 42. Then will I remember my covenant.



3. It is a qualification for, and an encouragement to, the service of God. This was *the oath he swore to our father Abraham*, That he would *give us power, and grace, to serve him in an acceptable manner to him, and a comfortable manner to ourselves*, ver. 74, 75. Here seems to be an allusion to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, which God tells Moses, was in pursuance of the covenant he made with Abraham, *Exod. iii. 6, 7, 8.* and that this was the design of his bringing them out of Egypt, *that they might serve God upon this mountain*, *Exod. iii. 12.* Note, The great design of gospel grace is, not to discharge us from, but to engage us to, and encourage us in, the service of God. Under this notion Christianity was always to be looked upon, as intended to make us truly religious, to admit us into the service of God, to bind us in it, and to quicken us in it. We are therefore delivered from the iron yoke of sin, that our necks may be put under the sweet and easy yoke of the Lord Jesus; *The very bonds which he has loosed, do bind us faster unto him*, *Psal. cxvi. 16.* see *Rom. xviii. 19.* We are hereby enabled, (1.) To serve God *without fear, ἀφόβως*; we are therefore put into a state of *holy safety*, that we might serve God with a *holy security, and serenity of mind*, as those that are *quiet from the fears of evil*. God must be served with a *filial fear*, a reverent, obedient fear, an awakening, quickening fear, but not with a *slavish fear*, like that of the slothful servant, who represented him to himself as a *hard master*, and unreasonable; not with that fear that has *torment and amazement* in it; not with the fear of a legal spirit, a *spirit of bondage*, but with the boldness of an evangelical spirit, a *spirit of adoption*. (2.) To serve him in *holiness and righteousness*, which includes the whole duty of man towards God and our neighbour. It is both the *intention*, and the direct tendency of the gospel, to renew upon us that image of God in which man was at first made, which consisted in *righteousness and true holiness*, *Eph. iv. 24.* Christ redeemed us *that we might serve God*, not in the legal services of sacrifice and offerings, but in the *spiritual services of holiness and righteousness*, *Psal. l. 14.* (3.) To serve him, *before him*, in the duties of his *immediate worship*, wherein we present ourselves *before the Lord*, to serve him as those that have an eye always upon him, and see his eye always upon us, upon our inward man; that is serving him *before him*. (4.) To serve him *all the days of our life*: the design of the gospel is to engage us to constancy, and perseverance in the service of God, by shewing us how much depends upon it, that we do not draw back; and by shewing us how Christ *loved us to the end*, and thereby engaged us to *love him to the end*.

2. He *blesseth God* for the work of *preparation*, for this salvation, which was to be done by John Baptist, ver. 76. *Thou child*, though now but a child of eight days old, shalt be called *the prophet of the Highest*; Jesus Christ is *the Highest*, for he is *God over all, blessed for evermore*, *Rom. ix. 5.* equal with the Father; John Baptist was *his prophet*, as Aaron was Moses's prophet, *Exod. vii. 1.* what he said was as his mouth, what he did was as his harbinger. Prophecy had now long ceased, but in John it *revived*, as it had done in Samuel, who was born of an aged Mother as John was, after a long cessation. John's business was,

1. To *prepare* people for the salvation, by preaching repentance and reformation, as great gospel duties; *Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord*, and but a little before him, to *prepare his ways*, to call people to make room for him, and get ready for his entertainment. Let every thing that may obstruct his progress, or embarrass it, or may hinder people from coming to him, be taken away: see *Isa. xl. 3, 4.* Let *vallies be filled, and hills be brought low*.

2. To give people a general idea of the salvation, that they might know not only what to do, but what to expect; for the doctrine he preached was, that the *kingdom of heaven* is at hand. There are two things in which you must know this salvation consists.

1. The *forgiveness* of what we have *done amiss*; it is salvation by the *remission of sins*, those sins which stand in the way of the salvation, and by which we were all become liable to ruin and condemnation, ver. 77. John Baptist gave people to understand, that though their case was sad by reason of sin, it was not desperate, for pardon might be obtained *through the tender mercy of our God*; the *bowels of mercy*, so the word is: there was nothing in us but a *piteous case* to recommend us to the divine compassion.

2. *Direction* to do better for the time to come: The gospel salvation not only encourageth us to hope that the works of darkness shall be forgiven us, but sets up a clear and true light, by which we may order our steps aright. In it *the day-spring hath visited us from on high*, ver. 78. and this also is owing to the *tender mercy of our God*: Christ is *ἀνατολή*, the *morning light*, the *rising sun*, *Mal. iv. 2.* The gospel brings light with it, *John iii. 19.* leaves us not to wander in darkness of Pagan ignorance, or in the moon-light of the Old Testament types or figures, but in it the day dawns; in John Baptist it began to break, but increased apace, and *shone more and more to the perfect day*. We have as much reason to welcome the gospel day, who enjoy it, as those have to welcome the morning who had long

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waited for it. (1.) The gospel is *discovering*, it shews us that which before we were utterly in the dark about, ver. 79. it is to *give light to them that sit in darkness*, the *light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*; the day-spring visited this dark world to *lighten the Gentiles*, *Acts xxvi. 18.* (2.) It is *reviving*; it brings light to them that sit in the *shadow of death*, as condemned prisoners in the dungeon, to bring them the tidings of a *pardon*, at least of a *reprieve*, and opportunity of procuring a pardon, it proclaims the *opening of the prison*, *Isa. lxi. 1.* brings the *light of life*, how pleasant is that light! (3.) It is *directing*, it is to *guide our feet in the way of peace*, into that way which will bring us to peace at last. It is not only a light to our eyes, but a light to our feet, *Psal. cxix. 105.* it guides us into the way of making our peace with God, of keeping up a comfortable communion; that *way of peace*, which as sinners, we have wandered from, and *have not known*, *Rom. iii. 17.* nor could ever have known of ourselves.

In the last verse, we have a short account of the younger years of John Baptist: though he was the son of a priest, he did not, like Samuel, go up, when he was a child, to minister before the Lord, for he was to prepare the way for a better priesthood. But we are here told,

1. Of his *eminency*, as to the *inward man*. The child grew in parts, and the capacities of his mind much more than other children; so that he *waxed strong in spirit*, had a strong judgment, and strong resolution. Reason and conscience (both which are the candle of the Lord) were so strong in him, that he had the inferior faculties of appetite and passion in complete subjection betimes. By this, it appeared he was betimes *filled with the Holy Ghost*, for those that are strong in the Lord, are *strong in spirit*.

2. Of his *obscurity* as to the *outward man*: he was in the *deserts*; not that he lived a Hermit, cut off from the society of men; no, we have reason to think he went up to Jerusalem, at the *feasts*, and frequented the synagogues on the sabbath-day, but his constant residence was in some of those scattered houses that were in the wildernesses of Zuph, or Maon, which we read of in the story of David. There he spent most of his time in contemplation, and devotion, and had not his education in the schools, or at the feet of the rabbins. Note, There is many a one qualified for great usefulness, who yet is buried alive; and many are long so, who are designed, and are thereby in the fitting for so much greater usefulness at last; as John Baptist, who was in the desert only till the day of his shewing to Israel when he was in the thirtieth year of his age. Note, There is a time fixed for the shewing of those favours to Israel, which are reserved: *The vision of them is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lye.*

## C H A P. II.

In this chapter we have an account of the birth, and infancy of our Lord Jesus; having had notice of his conception, and of the birth, and infancy of his fore-runner in the former chapter. The first-begotten is here brought into the world; let us go meet him with the *hosanna's*, blessed is he that cometh. Here is, (1.) The place and other circumstances of his birth, which spoke him the true Messiah, and such a one as we needed, but not such a one as the Jews expected, ver. 1—7. (2.) The notifying of his birth to the shepherds in that neighbourhood by an angel, the song of praise which the angels sung upon that occasion, and the spreading of the report of it by the shepherds, ver. 8—20. (3.) The circumcision of Christ, and the naming of him, ver. 21. (4.) The presenting of him in the temple, ver. 22—24. (5.) The testimonies of Simeon, and Anna the prophetess, concerning him, ver. 25—39. (6.) Christ's growth and pregnancy, ver. 40—52. (7.) His observing the passover at twelve years old, and his disputing with the doctors in the temple, ver. 41—51. And this, with what we have met with, *Matt. i. and ii.* is all we have concerning our Lord Jesus, till he entered upon his publick work, in the thirtieth year of his age.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governour of Syria) 3. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David) 5. To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.



7. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The *fulness of time* was now come, when God would send forth his Son *made of a woman*, and *made under the law*, and it was foretold that he should be born at Bethlehem. Now here we have an account of the time, place, and manner of it.

First, The time when our Lord Jesus was born. And several things may be gathered out of these verses, which intimate to us that it was the *proper time*.

1. He was born at the time when the *fourth monarchy* was in its height, just when it was become more than any of the three before it, an *universal monarchy*. He was born in the days of Augustus Cæsar, when the Roman empire extended itself further than ever, before or since, including Parthia one way, and Britain another way; so that it was then called *Terrarum orbis imperium*, and here that empire is called *all the world*, ver. 1. for there was scarce any part of the civilized world, but what was dependent on it. Now this was the time when the Messiah was to be born, according to Daniel's prophecy, Dan. ii. 44. *In the days of these kings, the kings of the fourth monarchy, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.*

2. He was born when Judea was become a province of the empire, and tributary to it; as appears evidently by this, that when all the Roman empire was taxed, the Jews were taxed among the rest; Jerusalem was taken by Pompey, the Roman general, about sixty years before this, who granted the government of the church to Hircanus, but not the government of the state, and by degrees it was more and more reduced, till now at length it was quite subdued; for Judea was ruled by Cyrenius, the Roman governor of Syria, ver. 2. the Roman writers call him Sulpitius Quirinius. Now just at this juncture the Messiah was to be born, for so was dying Jacob's prophecy, That Shiloh should come when the *scepter was departed from Judah*, and the *law-giver from between his feet*, Gen. xlix. 10. This was the *first taxing* that was made in Judea, the first badge of their servitude, therefore now Shiloh must come to set up his kingdom.

3. There is another circumstance as to the time, which is implied in this general enrolment of all the subjects of the empire; which is, that there was now an *universal peace* in the empire. The temple of Janus was shut, which it never used to be, if any wars were on foot; and now it was fit for the Prince of peace to be born, in whose days *swords should be beaten into plow-shares*.

Secondly, The place where our Lord Jesus was born is very observable; he was born at Bethlehem, so it was foretold, Mic. v. 2. the scribes so understood it, Matt. ii. 5, 6. so did the common people, John vii. 42. The name of the place was significant, Bethlehem signifies *the house of bread*; a proper place for him to be born in, who is the bread of life, the bread that *came down from heaven*. But that was not all, Bethlehem was the city of David, where he was born, and therefore there he must be born who was the *son of David*. Zion was also called the city of David, 2 Sam. v. 7. yet Christ was not born there; for Bethlehem was that city of David, where he was born in meanness, to be a *shepherd*; and that our Saviour when he humbled himself, chose for the place of his birth; not Zion, where he ruled in power and prosperity, that was to be a type of the church of Christ, *that mount Zion*. Now when the virgin Mary was with child, and near her time, providence so ordered it, that by order from the emperor, all the subjects of the *Roman empire* were to be *taxed*; that is, they were to *give in their names* to the proper officers, and they were to be *registered* and *enrolled*, according to their families, which is the proper signification of the word here used, and their being *taxed* was but secondary; it is supposed they made profession of subjection to the Roman empire, either by some set form of words, or at least, by payment of some small tribute, a penny suppose, in token of their allegiance, like a man's *attorning* tenant. Thus are they vassals upon record, and may thank themselves.

Now according to this *decree*, the Jews (who were now nice in distinguishing their tribes and families) provided that in their enrolments particular care should be had to preserve the memory of them. Thus foolishly are they solicitous to save the *shadow*, when they had lost the *substance*.

Now that which Augustus designed, was either to gratify his *pride*, in knowing the numbers of his people, and proclaiming it to the world, or he did it in *policy* to strengthen his interest, and make his government appear the more formidable; but providence had another reach in it. All the world shall be at the trouble of being *enrolled*, only that Joseph and Mary may; this brought them up from Nazareth in Galilee, to Bethlehem in Judea, because they were *of the stock and lineage of David*, ver. 4, 5. and perhaps being poor and low, they thought the royalty of their extraction rather a burthen and expence to them, than a matter of pride. Because it is difficult to suppose, that every Jew (women as well as men) was obliged to repair to the city

of which their ancestors were, and there be enrolled, now, at a time when they kept not to the bounds of their tribes as formerly, it may be offered as a conjecture, that this great exactness was used only with the *family of David*, concerning which it is probable the emperor gave particular orders, it having been the royal family, and still *talked of*, as designed to be so, that he might know the number and strength of that. And divers ends of providence were served by this.

1. Hereby the virgin Mary was brought big with child to Bethlehem, to be *delivered* there, according to the prediction; whereas she had designed to lie in at Nazareth. See how *man purpoſeth* and *God dispoſeth*; and how providence orders all things for the fulfilling of the scripture; and makes use of the projects men have for the serving their own purposes, quite beyond their intention, to serve his.

2. Hereby it appeared that Jesus Christ was of the *seed of David*, for else what brings his mother to Bethlehem now, but because she was *of the stock and lineage of David*? And this was a material thing to be *proved*, and required such an *authentick* proof as this. Justin Martyr and Tertullian, two of the most early advocates for the Christian religion, appeal to these *rolls* or *records* of the *Roman empire*, for the proof of Christ's being born of the house of David.

3. Hereby it appeared that he was *made under the law*; for he became a subject of the Roman empire as soon as he was born, a *servant of rulers*, Isa. xlix. 7. Many suppose that being born during the time of the taxing, he was enrolled as well as his father and mother, that it might appear how *he made himself of no reputation*, and *took upon him the form of a servant*; instead of having kings tributaries to him, when he came into the world he was himself a tributary.

Thirdly, The circumstances of his birth, which were very *mean*, and under all possible marks of contempt. He was indeed a *first-born son*, but it was poor honour to be the first-born of such a poor woman as Mary was, who had no inheritance to which he might be entitled as first-born, but what was in *nativity*.

1. He was under some abasements in common with other children; he was *wrapped in swaddling clothes*, as other children are, when they are new born, as if he could be bound, or needed to be kept straight. He that makes darkness a *swaddling band for the sea*, was himself wrapped in *swaddling bands*, Job xxxviii. 9. The everlasting Father became a child of time, and men said of him, whose out-goings were of old from everlasting, *we know this man whence he is*, John vii. 27. The Ancient of days became an infant of a span-long.

2. He was under some abasements peculiar to himself.

1. He was born *at an inn*. That son of David that was the glory of his father's house, had no inheritance that he could command, no not in the city of David; no nor a friend that would accommodate his mother in distress with lodgings to be brought to bed in. Christ was born *in an inn*, to intimate, that he came into the world but to sojourn here for a while, as in an inn, and to teach us to do likewise. An inn receives *all comers*, and so doth Christ. He hangs out the banner of love for his sign, and whoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out; only, unlike other inns, he welcomes those that come *without money, and without price*. All on free-coſt.

2. He was born *in a stable*; so some think the word signifies, which we translate *a manger*, a place for cattle to stand to be fed in; because there was *no room in the inn*; and for want of conveniencies, nay for want of necessities, he was laid *in the manger*, instead of a cradle. And the word which we render *swaddling clothes*, some derive from a word that signifies to *rend* or *tear*, and thence infer, that he was so far from having a good suit of childbed-linen, that his very swaddles were ragged and torn. His being born in a stable, and *laid in a manger*, was an instance, (1.) Of the poverty of his parents; had they been rich, room would have been made for them, but being poor, they must *shift* as they *could*. (2.) Of the corruption and degeneracy of manners in that age; that a woman in reputation for virtue and honour should be used so barbarously. If there had been any common humanity among them they would not have turned a woman in travail into a stable. (3.) It was an instance of the humiliation of our Lord Jesus. We were become by sin like an out-cast infant, helpless and forlorn; and such a one Christ was. Thus he would answer the type of Moses, the great prophet and law-giver of the Old Testament, who was in his infancy cast out in an ark of bulrushes, as Christ *in a manger*. Christ would hereby put a contempt upon all worldly glory, and teach us to slight it. Since *his own received him not*, let us not think strange if they *receive us not*.

8. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. 10. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you



you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 14. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men. 15. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. 17. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. 18. And all they that heard it, wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. 20. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

The meanest circumstances of Christ's humiliation were all along attended with some discoveries of his glory to balance them, and take off the offence of them; for even when he humbled himself, God did in some measure exalt him, and gave him earnest of his future exaltation. When we saw him wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, we were tempted to say, sure this cannot be the Son of God, but see his birth attended as it is here, with a choir of angels, and we shall say, surely it can be no other but the Son of God, concerning whom it was said, when he was brought into the world, let all the angels of God worship him, Heb. i. 6.

We had in Matthew an account of the notice given of the arrival of this ambassador, this prince from heaven, to the wise men who were Gentiles, by a star, here we are told of the notice given of it to the shepherds who were Jews, by an angel: to each God chose to speak, in the language they were most conversant with.

1. See here how the shepherds were employed, they were abiding in the fields adjoining to Bethlehem, and keeping watch over their flocks by night, ver. 8. The angel was not sent to the chief priests or the elders; they were not prepared to receive these tidings, but to a company of poor shepherds, that were like Jacob, plain men dwelling in tents, not like Esau, cunning hunters. The patriarchs were shepherds, Moses and David particularly were called from keeping sheep to rule God's people; and by this instance God would shew that he had still a favour for those of that innocent employment. Tidings were brought to Moses of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, when he was keeping sheep, and to these shepherds, who, it is probable, were devout pious men, the tidings were brought of a greater salvation. Observe (1.) They were not sleeping in their beds when this news was brought them, (though many had very acceptable intelligence from heaven in slumbering upon the bed) but abiding in the fields and watching. Those that would hear from God, must stir up themselves. They were broad awake, and therefore could not be deceived in what they saw and heard, so as those may who are half asleep. (2.) They were not now employed in acts of devotion, but in the business of their calling; they were keeping watch over their flock, to secure them from thieves and beasts of prey, it probably being in the summer time, when they kept their cattle out all night, as we do now, and did not house them. Note, We are not out of the way of divine visits, when we are sensibly employed in an honest calling, and abide with God in it.

2. How they were surprized with the appearance of an angel to them, ver. 9. Behold an angel of the Lord came upon them, of a sudden, ἐπέστη, stood over them; most probably in the air over their heads, as coming immediately from heaven: We read it, the angel, as if it were the same that appeared once and again in the chapter before, the angel Gabriel, that was caused to fly swiftly, but that is not certain. The angel's coming upon them, intimates, that they little thought of such a thing, or expected it; for it is in a preventing way that gracious visits are made us from heaven, or ever we are aware. That they might be sure it was an angel from heaven, they saw and heard the glory of the Lord round about them, such as made the night as bright as day; such a glory as used to attend God's appearance; a heavenly glory, or, an exceeding great glory, such as they could not bear the dazzling lustre of. This made them sore afraid, put them into a mighty consternation, as fearing some evil tidings; while we are conscious to our selves of so much guilt, we have reason to fear, lest every express from heaven be a messenger of wrath.

3. What the message was which the angel had to deliver to the shepherds, ver. 10, 11, 12. (1.) He gives a supersedeas to

their fears; fear not, for we have nothing to say to you that needs be a terror to you, you need not fear your enemies, and should not fear your friends. (2.) He furnisheth them with abundant matter for joy: Behold, I evangelize to you great joy, I solemnly declare it, and you have reason to bid it welcome, for it shall bring joy to all people, and not to the people of the Jews only; that unto you is born this day, at this time, a Saviour, the Saviour that has been so long expected, which is Christ the Lord, in the city of David, ver. 11. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed; he is the Lord, Lord of all; is a sovereign prince: Nay, he is God, for the Lord in the Old Testament answers to Jehovah. He is a Saviour, and he will be a Saviour to those only that accept of him for their Lord. The Saviour is born, he is born this day; and since it is matter of great joy to all people, it is not to be kept secret, you may proclaim it, may tell it to whom you please. He is born in the place where it was foretold he should be born, in the city of David; and he is born to you, to you Jews he is sent, in the first place to bless you, to you shepherds, though poor and mean in the world. This refers to Isa. ix. 6. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. To you men, not to us angels, he took not on him our nature. This is matter of joy indeed to all people, great joy, long looked for is come at last: let heaven and earth rejoice before this Lord, for he cometh. (3.) He gives them a sign for the confirming of their faith in this matter. How shall we find out this child in Bethlehem, which is now full of the descendants from David? You will find him by this token, he is lying in a manger, where sure never any new born infant was laid before. They expected to be told, you shall find him, though a babe, dressed up in robes, and lying in the best house in the town, lying in state, with a numerous train of attendants in rich liveries; no, you will find him wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. When Christ was here upon earth, he distinguished himself, and made himself remarkable, by nothing so much as the instances of his humiliation.

4. The angels doxology to God, and congratulations of men upon this solemn occasion, ver. 13, 14. The message was no sooner delivered by one angel, that was sufficient to go express, but suddenly there was with that angel, a multitude of the heavenly hosts; enow we may be sure to make a chorus, that were heard by the shepherds praising God; and to be sure, their song was not like that, Rev. xiv. 3. which no man could learn, for it was designed we should all learn it. (1.) Let God have the honour of this work, Glory to God in the highest. God's good-will to men, manifested in sending the Messiah, redounds very much to his praise; and angels in the highest heavens, though not immediately interested in it themselves, yet will celebrate it to his honour, Rev. v. 11, 12. Glory to God, whose kindness and love designed this favour, and whose wisdom contrived it in such a way, as that one divine attribute should not be glorified at the expence of another, but the honour of all effectually secured and advanced. Other works of God are for his glory, but the redemption of the world is for his glory in the highest. (2.) Let men have the joy of it; on earth peace, good-will towards men. God's good-will in sending the Messiah, introduced peace in this lower world, slew the enmity that sin had raised between God and man, and resettled a peaceable correspondence. If God be at peace with us, all peace results from thence; peace of conscience, peace with angels, peace between Jew and Gentile; peace is here put for all good, all that good which flows to us from the incarnation of Christ: All the good we have, or hope, is owing to God's good-will; and if we have the comfort of it, he must have the glory of it. Nor must any peace, any good, be expected in a way inconsistent with the glory of God; therefore not in any way of sin, nor in any way but by a mediator. Here was the peace proclaimed with great solemnity, whoever will, let them come and take the benefit of it; it is on earth peace, to men of good-will, so some copies read it, ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐνδοξίας; to men that have a good-will to God, and are willing to be reconciled; or, to men whom God has a good-will to, though vessels of his mercy. See how well affected the angels are to man, and to his welfare and happiness; how well pleased they were in the incarnation of the Son of God, though he passed by their nature; and ought not we much more to be affected with it. This is a faithful saying, attested by an innumerable company of angels, and well worthy of all acceptation, That the good-will of God towards men, is glory to God in the highest, and peace on the earth.

5. The visit which the shepherds made to the new born Saviour. (1.) They consulted about it, ver. 15. while the angels were singing their hymn, they could attend to that only, but when they were gone away from them into heaven; (for angels, when they appeared, never made any long stay, but returned as soon as they had dispatched their business) the shepherds said one to another, let us go to Bethlehem. Note, When extraordinary messages from the upper world are no more to be expected, we must set our selves to improve the advantages we have for the confirming of our faith, and the keeping up of our communion with God in this lower world. And it is no reflexion upon the testimony of angels, no, nor upon a divine testimony itself, to get it corroborated by observation and experience. But observe, these shepherds do not speak doubtfully, let us go see whether it be so or no; but with assurance, let us go see this thing which is come to pass;



pass; for, what room was left to doubt of it, when the Lord had thus made it known to them? the word spoken by angels was stedfast and unquestionably true. (2.) They immediately made the visit, ver. 16. They lost no time, but came with haste to the place, which, probably, the angel directed them to more particularly than is recorded: Go to the stable of such an inn, and there they found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger; and the poverty and meanness in which they found Christ the Lord, was no shock to their faith, who themselves knew what it was to live a life of comfortable communion with God, in very poor and mean circumstances. We have reason to think, that the shepherds told Joseph and Mary of the vision of the angels they had seen, and the song of the angels they had heard, which was a great encouragement to them, more than if a visit had been made them by the best ladies in the town. And it is probable, Joseph and Mary told the shepherds what visions they had had concerning the child; and so by communicating their experiences to each other, they greatly strengthened one another's faith.

6. The care which the shepherds took to spread the report of this, ver. 17. when they had seen it, though they saw nothing in the child, that should induce them to believe that he was Christ the Lord, yet the circumstances, how mean soever they were, agreeing with the sign that the angel had given them, they were abundantly satisfied: And, as the lepers, argued, 2 Kings vii. 9. This being a day of good tidings, they dare not hold their peace, but make known abroad the whole story of what was told them, both by the angels, and by Joseph and Mary concerning this child, that he was the Saviour, even Christ the Lord, that in him there is peace on earth, and that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born of a virgin. This they told to every body, and agreed in their testimony concerning it: And now, if when he is in the world, the world knows him not, it is their own faults, for they have sufficient notice given them. And what impression did it make upon people? Why truly, All they that heard it, wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds, ver. 18.

The shepherds were plain, down-right honest men, and they could not suspect them guilty of any design to impose upon them, what they said therefore, it is likely, might be true; and if it were true, they could not but wonder at it, that the Messiah should be born in a stable, and not in a palace; that angels should bring news of it to poor shepherds, and not to the chief priests. They wondered, but never enquired any further about the Saviour, their duty to him, or advantages by him, but let the thing drop as a nine days wonder. O the amazing stupidity of the men of that generation! Justly were the things which belonged to their peace hid from their eyes, when they thus wilfully shut their eyes against them.

7. The use which those made of those things who did believe them, and receive the impression of them.

1. The virgin Mary made them the matter of her private meditation. She said little, but kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart, ver. 19. She laid the evidences together, and kept them in reserve, to be compared with the discoveries that should after be made her. As she had silently left it to God to clear up her honesty, when that was suspected, so she silently leaves it to him to publish her honour, now when it was veiled; and it is satisfaction enough to find, that if no body else takes notice of the birth of her child, angels do. Note, The truths of Christ are worth keeping; and the way to keep them safe, is to ponder them: Meditation is the best help to memory.

2. The shepherds made them the matter of their more publick praises. If others were not affected with those things, yet they themselves were, ver. 20. They returned glorifying and praising God, in concurrence with the holy angels: If others would not regard the report they made to them, God would accept the thanksgivings they offered to him. They praised God for what they had heard from the angel, and for what they had seen, the babe in the manger; and just then in the swaddling, when they came in, as it had been spoken to them. They thanked God they had seen Christ, though in the depth of his humiliation; as afterwards the cross of Christ, so now his manger, though to some it was foolishness, and a stumbling-block; yet others saw in it, and admired, and praised the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

21. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. 22. And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord, 23. (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord) 24. And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.

Our Lord Jesus being made of a woman, was made under the law, Gal. iv. 4. He was not only as the son of a daughter of Adam, made under the law of nature, but as the son of a daughter of Abraham, he was made under the law of Moses; he puts his neck under that yoke, though it was a heavy yoke, and a shadow of good things to come: And though its institutions were beggarly elements, and rudiments of this world, as the apostle calls them, Christ submitted to it, that he might with the better grace cancel it, and set it aside for us.

Now here we have two instances of his being made under that law, and submitting to it.

1. He was circumcised on the very day that the law appointed, ver. 21. When eight days were accomplished, that day seven-night that he was born, they circumcised him. (1.) Though it was a painful operation, surely a bloody husband thou hast been, said Zipporah to Moses, because of the circumcision, Exod. iv. 25. yet Christ would undergo it for us; nay, therefore he submitted to it, to give an instance of his early obedience, his obedience unto blood. Then he shed his blood by drops, which afterwards he poured out in purple streams. (2.) Though it supposed him a stranger, that was by that ceremony to be admitted into covenant with God, whereas he had always been his beloved Son: Nay, though it supposed him a sinner, that needed to have his filthiness taken away, whereas he had no impurity, or superfluity of naughtiness to be cut off, yet he submitted to it; nay, therefore he submitted to it, because he would be made in the likeness not only of flesh but of sinful flesh, Rom. viii. 3. (3.) Though thereby he made himself a debtor to the whole law, Gal. v. 3. yet he submitted to it; nay, therefore he submitted to it, because he would take upon him the form of a servant, though he was free-born. Christ was circumcised, (1.) That he might own himself of the seed of Abraham, and of that nation of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, and who was to take on him the seed of Abraham, Heb. ii. 16. (2.) That he might own himself a surety for our sins, and an undertaker for our safety. Circumcision (saith Dr. Goodwin) was our bond whereby we acknowledged our selves debtors to the law; and Christ, by being circumcised, did as it were set his hand to it, being made sin for us. The ceremonial law consisted much in sacrifices, Christ hereby obliged himself to offer not the blood of bulls or goats, but his own blood, which none that ever were circumcised could oblige themselves to, but he only. (3.) That he might justify, and put an honour upon the dedication of the infant seed of the church to God, by that ordinance which is the instituted seal of the covenant, and of the righteousness which is by faith, as circumcision was, (Rom. iv. 11.) and baptism is. And certainly his being circumcised at eight days old, doth make much more for the dedicating of the seed of the faithful by baptism, in their infancy, than his being baptized at thirty years old doth, for the deferring of it till they are grown up. The change of the ceremony alters not the substance.

At his circumcision, according to the custom, he had his name given him; he was called Jesus, or Joshua, for he was so named of the angel to his mother Mary, before he was conceived in the womb, Luke i. 31. and to his supposed father Joseph after, Matt. i. 21. (1.) It was a common name among the Jews, as John was, (Col. iv. 11.) and in this he would be made like unto his brethren. (2.) It was the name of two eminent types of him in the Old Testament, Joshua the successor of Moses, that was commander of Israel, and conqueror of Canaan; and Joshua the high priest, who was therefore purposely crowned, that he might prefigure Christ as a priest upon his throne, Zach. vi. 11, 13. (3.) It was very significant of his undertaking: Jesus signifies a Saviour. He would be denominated not from the glories of his divine nature, but from his gracious designs as Mediator, he brings salvation.

2. He was presented in the temple: This was done with an eye to the law, and at the time appointed by the law, when he was forty days old, when the days of her purification were accomplished, ver. 22. many copies, and authentick ones, read *αὐτῶν* for *αὐτῆς*, the days of their purification, the purification both of the mother and of the child, for so it was intended to be by the law; and our Lord Jesus, though he had no impurity to be cleansed from, yet submitted to it, as he did to circumcision, because he was made sin for us; and that as by the circumcision of Christ, we might be circumcised in the virtue of our union, and communion with him, with a spiritual circumcision made without hands, Col. ii. 11. so in the purification of Christ, we might be spiritually purified from that filthiness and corruption which we brought into the world with us. Now according to the law,

1. The child Jesus being a first-born son, was presented to the Lord, in one of the courts of the temple: The law is here recited, ver. 23. Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord, because by a special writ of protection, the first-born of Israel were preserved, when the first-born of the Egyptians were slain by the destroying angel; so that Christ as first-born, was a priest by a title surer than that of Aaron's house. Christ was the first-born among many brethren, and was called holy to the Lord, so as never any other was, yet he was presented to the Lord, as other first-born were, and no otherwise. Though he was newly come out of the bosom of the Father, yet he was presented to him by the hands of a priest, as if he had been



been a stranger that needed one to introduce him. His being *presented to the Lord*, now signified his *presenting himself* to the Lord as Mediator, when he was caused to *draw near*, and *approach unto him*, Jer. xxx. 21. But according to the law he was *redeemed*, Numb. xviii. 15. *The first-born of man shalt thou redeem*, and *five shekels* was the value, Lev. xxvii. 6. Numb. xviii. 16. But probably in case of poverty, the priest was allowed to take less, or perhaps nothing, for no mention is made of it here. Christ was *presented to the Lord*, not to be brought back, for his ear was *bored to God's door-post*, to serve him for ever; and though he is not left in the temple as Samuel was, to minister there, yet like him, he is given to the Lord *as long as he lives*, and ministers to him in the true temple *not made with hands*.

2. The mother brought her offering, *ver. 24.* when she had presented that son of her's unto the Lord, who was to be the great sacrifice, she might have been excused from offering any other; but so it is *said in the law of the Lord*, that law which was yet in force, and therefore so it must be done, she must offer a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons; had she been of ability, she must have brought a lamb for a burnt-offering, and a dove for a sin-offering; but being poor, and not able to reach the price of a lamb, she brings two doves, one for a burnt-offering, and the other for a sin-offering: See Lev. xii. 7, 8. To teach us in every address to God, and particularly in those upon special occasions, both to give thanks to God for his mercies to us, and to acknowledge with sorrow and shame our sins against him, and in both we must give glory to him; nor do we ever want matter for both. Christ was not *conceived* and *born* in sin, as others are, so that there was not that occasion in his case that is in others; yet, because he was made under the law, he complied with it, *Thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness*. Much more doth it become the best of men to join in confessions of sin, for *who can say, I have made my heart clean?*

25. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the holy Ghost was upon him. 26. And it was revealed unto him by the holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27. And he came by the spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, 28. Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. 30. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation: 31. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: 32. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. 33. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. 34. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against: 35. (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. 36. And there was one Anna a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity: 37. And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years: which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38. And she coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. 39. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. 40. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.

Still Christ has honour done him, then when he humbles himself, to balance the offence of it; that we might not be stumbled at the *meannefs of his birth*; angels then did him honour; and now, that we may not be offended at his being presented in the temple, like other children born in sin, and without any manner of solemnity peculiar to him; but silently, and in the crowd of other children, Simeon and Anna now do him honour, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

First, A very honourable testimony is born to him by Simeon, which was both a reputation to the child, and an encouragement to the parents, and might have been a happy introducing of the priests into an acquaintance with the Saviour, if those watchmen had not been blind. Now observe here,

1. The account that is given us concerning this Simeon, or Simon. He dwelt now in Jerusalem, and was eminent for his

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piety and communion with God: Some learned men, that have been conversant with the Jewish writers, find that there was at this time one Simeon, a man of great note in Jerusalem, the son of Hillel, and the first to whom they gave the title of Rabban, the highest title that they gave to their doctors, and which was never given but to seven of them: He succeeded his father Hillel as president of the college which his father founded, and of the great Sanhedrin. The Jews say, he was endued with a *prophetic* spirit, and that he was turned out of his place, because he witnessed against the common opinion of the Jews, concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messiah; and they likewise observe, that there is no mention of him in their Mishna, or book of traditions, which intimates that he was no patron of those fooleries. One thing objected against this conjecture is, that at this time his father Hillel was living, and that he himself lived many years after this, as appears by the Jewish histories; but as to that he is not here said to be old; and his saying, *now let thy servant depart*, intimates, that he was willing to die *now*, but doth not conclude, that therefore he did die quickly. St. Paul lived many years after he had spoken of his death as *near*, Acts xx. 25. Another thing objected is, That the son of Simeon was Gamaliel, a Pharisee, and an enemy to Christianity; but as to that, it is no new thing for a faithful lover of Christ, to have a son a bigotted Pharisee.

The account given of him here is, (1.) That he was *just* and *devout*, *just* towards men, and *devout* towards God; these two must always go together, and each will befriend the other, but neither will atone for the defect of the other. (2.) That he *waited for the consolation of Israel*, i. e. for the coming of the Messiah, in whom alone the nation of Israel, that was now miserably harrassed, and oppressed, would find *consolation*. Christ is not only the author of his peoples comfort, but the matter and ground of it, the *consolation of Israel*. He was long a coming, and they who believed he would come continued *waiting*, *desiring* his coming, and *hoping* for it with *patience*; I had almost said with some degree of *impatience*, waiting till it came. He *understood by books*, as Daniel, that the time was at hand, and therefore was now, more than ever, big with expectation of it. The unbelieving Jews, who still expect that which is already come, use it as an oath, or solemn protestation, *As ever I hope to see the consolation of Israel*, so, and so it is. Note, The consolation of Israel is to be waited for, and it is worth waiting for, and it will be very welcome to those who have *waited* for it, and continue waiting. (3.) The *Holy Ghost* was upon him, not only as a spirit of holiness, but as a spirit of prophecy; he was *filled with the Holy Ghost*, and enabled to speak things above himself. (4.) He had a gracious promise made him, that before he died he should have a sight of the Messiah, *ver. 26.* He was searching *what manner of time* the Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament prophets did signify, and whether it were not now at hand; and he received *this oracle* (for so the word signifies) *that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah, the Lord's anointed*. Note, Those, and those only, can with courage *see death*, and look it in the face without terror, that have had by faith a sight of Christ.

2. The seasonable coming of Simeon into the temple, at the time when Christ was presented there, *ver. 27.* just then, when Joseph and Mary brought in the child to be registered, as it were, in the church book, among the first-born; Simeon came by direction of *the Spirit* into the temple. The same Spirit that had provided for the *support* of his *hope*, now provided for the *transport* of his *joy*. It was whispered in his ear, Go to the temple now, and you shall see what you have longed to see. Note, Those that would see Christ must go to his temple, for there *the Lord whom ye seek* shall suddenly come to *meet you*, and there you must be ready to *meet him*.

3. The abundant satisfaction wherewith he welcomed this sight; he *took him up in his arms*, *ver. 28.* he *embraced* him with the greatest affection imaginable, laid him in his bosom, as near his heart as he could, which is as full of joy as it can hold. He *took him up in his arms* to present him to the Lord, so some think, either to do the parent's part, or the priest's part; for divers of the ancients say, he was himself a priest. When we receive the record which the gospel gives us of Christ, with a lively faith, and the offer it makes us of Christ, with love and resignation, then we *take Christ in our arms*. It was promised him he should have a sight of Christ, but more is *performed* than was *promised*; he has him in his arms.

4. The solemn declaration he made hereupon: He *blessed God*, and said, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace*, *ver. 29, 30, 31, 32.*

1. He has a pleasant prospect *concerning himself*, and (which is a great attainment) is got quite above the love of life, and fear of death; nay, he is arrived to a holy contempt of life, and desire of death; *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart*, for mine eyes have seen the salvation I was promised a sight of, before I died. Here is, (1.) An acknowledgment that God had been *as good as his word*; there has not failed one tittle of his good promises, as Solomon owns, 1 Kings viii. 56. Note, Never any that hoped in God's word, were made ashamed of their hope. (2.) A thanksgiving for it: He *blessed God*, that he saw that salvation in his



arms, which many prophets and kings desired to see, and might not. 3. A confession of his faith, that this child in his arms was the *Saviour*, the *salvation* itself; *thy salvation*, the salvation of thine appointing; the salvation *which thou hast prepared* with a great deal of contrivance. And while it has been thus long in the coming, it hath still been in the preparing. (4.) It is a farewell to this world, *Now let thy servant depart*: Now mine eyes have been blessed with this sight, let them be closed, and see no more in this world. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, *Eccl. i. 8.* till it hath *seen Christ*, and then it is. What a poor thing doth this world look, to one that hath Christ in his arms, and salvation in his eye! Now adieu to all my friends and relations, all my enjoyments and employments here, even the temple itself. (5.) It is a welcome to death, *Now let thy servant depart*. Note, Death is a departure, the soul's departure out of the body, from the world of sense, to the world of spirits. We must not depart till God gives us our discharge, for we are his *servants*, and must not quit his service till we have accomplished our time. Moses was promised that he should see Canaan, and then *die*, but he prayed that that word might be altered, *Deut. iii. 24, 25.* Simeon is promised that he should not *see death*, till he had *seen Christ*, and he is willing to construe that beyond what was expressed, as an intimation, that when he had seen Christ he should die; *Lord, be it so*, saith he, *now let me depart*. See here, (1.) How comfortable the death of a good man is; he departs as *God's servant* from the place of his toil, to that of his rest. He departs in *peace*, peace with God, peace with his own conscience; in *peace* with death, well reconciled to it, well acquainted with it. He departs according to *God's word*, as Moses at the mouth of the Lord, *Deut. xxxiv. 5.* the word of precept, *Go up and die*; the word of promise, *I will come again, and receive you to my self*. (2.) What is the ground of this comfort? *For mine eyes have seen thy salvation*. This speaks more than a great complacency in the sight, like that of Jacob, *Gen. xlv. 30.* *Now let me die, since I have seen thy face*; it speaks a believing expectation of a happy state on the other side death, through this salvation he now had a sight of, which not only takes off the terror of death, but makes it *gain*, *Phil. i. 21.* Note, Those that have welcomed Christ, may welcome death.

2. He has a pleasant prospect concerning the world, and concerning the church. This salvation shall be,

1. A blessing to the world. It is *prepared before the face of all people*, not to be hid a corner, but to be made known; to be a *light to lighten the Gentiles* that now sit in darkness: They shall have the knowledge of him and of God, and another world through him: This has reference to *Isa. xlix. 6.* *I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles*, for Christ came to be the light of the world, not a candle in the Jewish candlestick, but the *sun of righteousness*.

2. A blessing to the church: *The glory of thy people Israel*. It was an honour to the Jewish nation, that the Messiah sprung out of one of their tribes, and was born, and lived, and died among them. And of those who were Israelites indeed, of the spiritual Israel, he was indeed *the glory*, and will be so to eternity. *Isa. lx. 19.* They shall glory in him, *In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory*, *Isa. xlv. 25.* When Christ ordered his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, therein he made himself a *light to lighten the Gentiles*; and when he added *beginning at Jerusalem*, he made himself *the glory of his people Israel*.

5. The prediction concerning this child, which he delivered with his blessing to Joseph and Mary. They *marvelled at these things*, which were still more and more fully and plainly spoken concerning this child, *ver. 33.* And because they were affected with, and had their faith strengthened by that which was said to them, here is more said to them.

1. Simeon shews them what reason they had to *rejoice*; for he *blessed them*, *ver. 34.* he pronounced them blessed who had the honour to be related to this child, and were intrusted with the bringing him up: He *prayed* for them that God would *bless* them, and would have others do so too. They had reason to rejoice, for this child should be not only a comfort, and honour to them, but a publick blessing: He is *set for the rising again of many in Israel*, i. e. for the conversion of many to God that are dead and buried in sin, and for the consolation of many in God, that are sunk and lost in sorrow and despair. And those whom he is *set for the fall of*, may be the same with those whom he is *set for the rising again of*: He is *set εἰς πᾶσι καὶ ἀνάστασις*, for their *fall* in order to their *rising again*; to humble and abase them, and bring them off from all confidence in themselves, that they may be exalted by relying on Christ: Wounds, and then heals. Paul *falls* and rises again.

2. He shews them likewise what reason they had to *rejoice with trembling*, according to the advice given of old, with reference to the Messiah's kingdom, *Psal. ii. 11.* Lest Joseph, and Mary especially, should be *lifted up* with the abundance of the revelations; here is a *thorn in the flesh* for them, an allay to their joy, and it is what we sometimes need.

1. It is true, Christ shall be a blessing to Israel, but there are those in Israel whom he is *set for the fall of*, whose corruptions will be provoked, who will be prejudiced and enraged against

him, and offended, and whose sin and ruin will be aggravated by the revelation of Jesus Christ; many that will extract poison to themselves out of the balm of Gilead, and split their souls on the rock of salvation, to whom this precious foundation-stone will be a *stone of stumbling*. This refers to that prophecy, *Isa. viii. 14, 15.* He shall be *for a sanctuary* to some, and yet for a *snare* to others, *1 Pet. ii. 7, 8.* Note, As it is pleasant to think how many there are to whom Christ and his gospel are a favour of life unto life, so it is sad to think how many there are to whom it is a favour of death unto death. He is *set for a sign*, to be admired by some, but by others, by many, spoken against. He had many *eyes upon him* during the time of his publick ministry, he was a *sign*, but he had many *tongues against him*, the contradiction and reproach of sinners, he was continually cavilled at and abused; and the effects of this will be, that the *thoughts of many hearts will be revealed*, *ver. 35.* i. e. upon this occasion men will *shew themselves*, will discover, and so distinguish themselves. The secret good affections, and dispositions in the minds of some, will be revealed by their embracing Christ, and closing with him; the secret corruptions, and vicious dispositions of others, that otherwise would never have appeared so bad, will be revealed by their enmity to Christ, and their rage against him. Men will be judged of by the thoughts of their hearts, their thoughts concerning Christ; are they for him, or are they for his adversaries? The *word of God* is a discernor of the *thoughts and intents of the heart*, and by it we are discovered to ourselves, and shall be judged hereafter.

2. It is true, Christ shall be a comfort to his mother, but be not thou too proud of it, for a *sword shall pass through thine own soul also*. He shall be a suffering Jesus; and, (1.) Thou shalt *suffer with him*, by sympathy, more than other of his friends, because of the nearness of thy relation, and strength of affection to him. When he was abused, it was a *sword in her bones*. When she stood by his cross, and saw him dying, we may well think her inward grief was such, that it might truly be said, *a sword pierced through her soul*, it cut her to the heart. (2.) Thou shalt *suffer for him*; many understand it as a prediction of her martyrdom; and some of the ancients say, it had its accomplishment in that. Note, In the midst of our greatest delights, and advancements in this world, it is good for us to know that bonds and afflictions abide us.

Secondly, He is taken notice of by one Anna, or Ann, a *prophetess*, that one of each sex might bear witness to him, in whom both *men and women* are invited to believe, that they may be saved. Observe,

1. The account here given of this Anna, who she was; she was, (1.) *A prophetess*, the Spirit of prophecy now began to revive, which had ceased in Israel above three hundred years. Perhaps no more is meant, but that she was one who had understanding in the scriptures above other women, and made it her business to instruct the *younger women* in the things of God. Though it was a very degenerate age of the church, yet God *left not himself without witness*. (2.) She was the daughter of Phanuel; her father's name (saith Grotius) is mentioned, to put us in mind of Jacob's Phanuel, or Peniel, *Gen. xxxii. 30.* that now the mystery of that should be unfolded, when in Christ we should, as it were, see God face to face, and our lives be preserved; and her name signifies *gracious*. (3.) She was of *the tribe of Asher*, which was in Galilee; this, some think, is taken notice of, to refute those who said *out of Galilee ariseth no prophet*, when no sooner doth prophecy revive, but it appeared from Galilee. (4.) She was of *a great age*, a widow of about eighty-four years; some think, she had now been eighty-four years a widow, and then she must be considerably above a hundred years old; others, rather than suppose that a woman so very old should be capable of fasting and praying, as she did, suppose that she was only eighty-four years of age, and had been long a widow: Though she was a young widow, and had lived with her husband but seven years, yet she never married again, but continued a widow to her dying day, which is mentioned to her praise. (5.) She was a constant resident *in*, or at least attendant *on*, the temple. Some think she had lodgings in the courts of the temple, either in an alms-house, being maintained by the temple charities; or, as a prophetess she was lodged there, as in a proper place to be consulted, and advised with, by those that desired to know the mind of God, others think her not *departing from the temple* means no more, but that she was constantly there at the time of divine service: When any good work was to be done, she was ready to join with it. It is most probable she had an apartment of her own among the out-buildings of the temple; and, besides her constant attendance on the publick worship, abounded in private devotions, for she *served God with fastings and prayers night and day*: Having no secular business to employ herself in, or being past it, she gave up herself wholly to her devotions, and not only *fasted twice in the week*, but always lived a mortified life, and spent that time in religious exercises, which others spent in eating, and drinking, and sleeping; she not only observed the *hours of prayer*, but prayed *night and day*; was always in a praying frame, lived a life of prayer, gave herself to prayer, frequent in ejaculations, large in solemn prayers, and very particular in her intercessions. And in those she *served* God;



God; that was it that put a value upon them, and an excellency into them: The Pharisees *fasted oft*, and made *long prayers*, but they served themselves, and their own pride and covetousness in their fastings and prayers; but this good woman not only did that which was good, but did it from a good principle, and with a good end; she *served God*, and aimed at his honour, in *fasting and prayers*. Note, 1. Devotion is a thing we ought to be constant in, other duties are in season now and then, but we must *pray always*. 2. It is a pleasant sight to see aged Christians abounding in acts of devotion, as those that are not *weary of well-doing*, that do not think themselves *above* these exercises, or *past* them, but that take more and more pleasure in them, and see more and more need of them, till they come to heaven. 3. Those who are diligent and faithful in improving the light and means they have, shall have further discoveries made them. Anna is now at length abundantly recompensed for her attendance so many years in the temple.

2. The testimony she bore to our Lord Jesus, *ver. 38*. She *came in at that instant*, when the child was presented, and Simeon discoursed concerning him; she who was so *constant* to the temple, could not miss the opportunity.

Now, (1.) She *gave thanks likewise to the Lord*, just as Simeon, perhaps like him, wishing now to depart in peace. Note, Those to whom Christ is *made known*, have reason enough to *give thanks to the Lord* for so great a favour; and we should be excited to that duty, by the praises and thanksgivings of others; why should not we *give thanks likewise*, as well as they? Anna concurred with Simeon, and helped to make up the harmony. She *confessed unto the Lord*, so it may be read; she made an open profession of her faith concerning this child.

(2.) She, as a prophetess, instructed others concerning him: She *spoke of him to all them* that believed the Messiah would come, and with him, *looked for redemption in Jerusalem*. Redemption was the thing wanted, waited for, and wished for; redemption in *Jerusalem*, for from thence the *word of the Lord* was to go forth, *Isa. ii. 3*. Some there were in Jerusalem, that *looked for redemption*, yet but a few; for Anna, it should seem, had acquaintance with them all, that were joint expectants with her of the Messiah, she knew where to find them, or they where to find her, and she told them all the good news, that she had seen the Lord, and it was great news; this of his birth now, as afterwards that of his resurrection. Note, Those that have got an acquaintance with Christ *themselves*, should do all they can, to bring others acquainted with him.

Lastly, Here is a short account of the infancy and childhood of our Lord Jesus.

1. Where he spent it, *ver. 39*. when the ceremony of presenting the child, and purifying the mother, was all over, they *returned into Galilee*. Luke relates no more concerning them, till they were returned into Galilee; but it appears by St. Matthew's gospel, *chap. ii*. that from Jerusalem they returned to Bethlehem, where the wise men of the east found them, and there they continued till they were directed to flee into Egypt, to escape the malice and rage of Herod; and returning from thence when Herod was dead, they were directed to go to their old quarters, in Nazareth, from whence they had been, perhaps, some years absent. It is here called *their own city*, because there they had lived a great while, and their relations were there. He was ordered further from Jerusalem, because his kingdom and priesthood, were to have no affinity with the present government of the Jewish church, or state. He is sent into a place of obscurity and reproach, for in this, as in other things, he must humble himself, and *make himself of no reputation*.

2. How he spent it, *ver. 40*. In all things *it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren*, and therefore he passed through infancy, and childhood, as other children did, yet without sin; nay, yet with manifest indications of a divine nature in him. As other children, he *grew* in stature of body, and the improvement of understanding, in his human soul, that his *natural* body might be a figure of his *mystical* body, which, though animated by a perfect spirit, yet *maketh increase of itself*, till it comes to the *perfect man*, *Eph. iv. 13, 16*. But, (1.) Whereas other children are weak in understanding and resolution, he was *strong in spirit*. By the Spirit of God, his human soul was endued with extraordinary vigour, and all his faculties performed their offices in an extraordinary manner. He reasoned strongly, and his judgment was penetrating. (2.) Whereas other children have *foolishness bound in their hearts*, which appears in what they say or do, he was *filled with wisdom*, not by any advantages of instruction and education, but by the operation of the Holy Ghost; every thing he said, and did, was wisely said, and wisely done, above his years. (3.) Whereas other children shew, that the corruption of nature is in them, and the *tares of sin* grow up with the *wheat of reason*; he made it appear, that nothing but *the grace of God* was upon him, the wheat sprung up without tares; and that, whereas other children are, by nature, children of wrath, he was *greatly beloved*, and high in the favour of God; that God loved him, and cherished him, and took a particular care of him.

41. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. 42. And when he was

twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast. 43. And when they had fulfilled the days as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. 44. But they supposing him to have been in the company, went a days journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance. 45. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. 46. And it came to pass, that after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. 47. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. 48. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. 49. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Fathers business? 50. And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. 51. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. 52. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

We have here the only passage of story recorded, concerning our blessed Saviour, from his infancy, to the day of his shewing to Israel at twenty-nine years old, and therefore we are concerned to make much of this, for it is in vain to wish we had more. Here is,

First, Christ's *going up with his parents* to Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover, *ver. 41, 42*.

1. It was their constant practice to attend there, according to the law, though it was a long journey, and they were poor, and perhaps not well able, without straitening themselves, to bear the expences of it. Note, Publick ordinances must be frequented, and we must *not forsake the assembling ourselves together*, as the manner of some is: Worldly business must give way to spiritual concerns. Joseph and Mary had a Son in the house with them, that was able to teach them better than all the rabbins at Jerusalem, yet they *went up thither, after the custom of the feast*: The Lord loves the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob, and so should we. We have reason to suppose, that Joseph went up likewise, at the feasts of *pentecost* and *tabernacles*, for all the males were to appear there *thrice a year*, but Mary only at the *passover*, which was the greatest of the three feasts, and had most gospel in it.

2. The child Jesus, at *twelve years old*, went up with them. The Jewish doctors say, that at twelve years old, children must begin to fast from time to time, that they may learn to fast on the day of atonement: And at thirteen years old, a child begins to be a *son of the commandment*, i. e. obliged to the duties of adult church membership, having been from his infancy, by virtue of his circumcision, a *son of the covenant*. It is not said that this was the *first time* that Jesus went up to Jerusalem, to worship at the feast, probably he had done it for some years before, having spirit and wisdom above his years; and all should attend on publick worship, that can *bear with understanding*, *Neh. viii. 2*. Those children that are forward in other things, should be put forward in religion. It is for the honour of Christ, that children should attend on publick worship, and he is pleased with their hosannas: And those children that were in their infancy dedicated to God, should be called upon when they are grown up, to come to the *gospel-passover*, to the Lord's supper, that they may make it their own act and deed, to join themselves to the Lord.

Secondly, Christ's *tarrying behind his parents at Jerusalem*, unknown to them, in which he designed to give an early specimen of what he was reserved for.

1. His parents did not return till they had *fulfilled the days*; had stayed there all the seven days at the feast, though it was not absolutely necessary they should stay longer than the two first days, after which many went home. Note, It is good to stay to the conclusion of an ordinance, as becomes those who say *it is good to be here*, and not to hasten away, as if we were like Doeg, *detained before the Lord*.

2. The child *tarried behind in Jerusalem*, not because he was loth to go home, or shy of his parents company, but because he had business to do there, and would let his parents know, that he had a *Father in heaven*, whom he was to be *observant* of, more than of *them*; and respect to *him*, must not be construed disrespect to *them*; some conjecture that he tarried behind in the temple, for it was the custom of the pious Jews, that morning that they were to go home, to go first to the temple to worship God, and there he *stayed behind*, and found entertainment there, till they found him again: Or perhaps he stayed at the house where they lodged, or some other friend's house, (and such a child as he



was, could not but be the darling of all that knew him, and every one would court his company) and went up to the temple only at church-time; but so it was that he stayed behind. It is good to see young people willing to dwell in the house of the Lord; they are then like Christ.

3. His parents went the first day's journey, without any suspicion that he was left behind, for they supposed him to have been in the company, ver. 44. On these occasions, the crowd was very great, especially the first day's journey, and the roads full of people, and they concluded he came along with some of their neighbours, and they sought him among their kindred and acquaintance, that were upon the road going down: Pray did you see our Son? Or, did you see him? Like the the spouse's enquiry, saw ye him whom my soul loveth? This was a jewel worth seeking after. They knew every one would be desirous of his company, and he would be willing to do good among his kinsfolks and acquaintance, but among them they found him not, ver. 45. There are many, too many, who are our kinsfolks and acquaintance, that we cannot avoid conversing with, among whom we find little or nothing of Christ. When they could not hear of him in this, and the other company upon the road, yet they hoped they should meet with him at the place where they lodged that night, but there they could learn no tidings of him. Compare this with Job xxiii. 8, 9.

4. When they found him not at their quarters at night, they turned back again, next morning, to Jerusalem seeking him. Note, Those that would find Christ, must seek till they find, for he will at length be found of those that seek him, and will be found their bountiful rewarder. They that have lost their comforts in Christ, and the evidences of their interest in him, must bethink themselves where, and when, and how they lost them, and must turn back again, to the place where they last had them; must remember whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works, and return to their first love, Rev. ii. 4, 5. Those that would recover their lost acquaintance with Christ, must go to Jerusalem, the city of our solemnities, the place which he has chosen to put his name there; must attend upon him in his ordinances, in the gospel-passover, there they may hope to meet him.

5. The third day they found him in the temple, in some of the apartments belonging to the temple, where the doctors of the law kept not their courts, but their conferences rather, or their schools for disputation, and there they found him sitting in the midst of them, ver. 46. not standing as a catechumen to be examined, or instructed by them, for he had discovered such measures of knowledge and wisdom, that they admitted him to sit among them as a fellow, or member of their society. This is an instance, not only that he was filled with wisdom, ver. 40. but that he hath both a desire to increase it, and a readiness to communicate it; and herein he is an example to children and young people, who should learn of Christ, to delight in the company of those they may get good by, and chuse to sit in the midst of the doctors, rather than in the midst of the players: Let them begin at twelve years old, and sooner, to enquire after knowledge, and to associate with those that are able to instruct them; it is a hopeful and promising preface in youth, to be desirous of instruction. Many a youth at Christ's age now, would have been playing with the children in the temple, but he was sitting with the doctors in the temple. (1.) He heard them: Those that would learn must be swift to hear. (2.) He asked them questions, whether, as a teacher, he had authority so to ask, or as a learner, he had humility so to ask, I know not, or whether as an associate, or joint searcher after truth, which must be found out by mutual amicable disquisitions. (3.) He returned answers to them, which were very surprising and satisfactory, ver. 47. And his wisdom and understanding appeared as much in the questions he asked, as in the answers he gave, so that all that heard him were astonished: They never heard one so young, nor indeed any of their greatest doctors talk sense at that rate that he did; like David, he had more understanding than all his teachers, yea, than the ancients, Psal. cxix. 99, 100. Now Christ shewed forth some rays of his glory, which were presently drawn in again: He gave them a taste (saith Calvin) of his divine wisdom and knowledge. Methinks this publick appearance of Christ in the temple, as a teacher, was like Moses's early attempt to deliver Israel, which Stephen puts this construction upon, that he supposed his brethren would have understood by that, how God by his hand would deliver them, Acts vii. 24, 25. They might have taken the hint, and been delivered then, but they understood not; so they here might have had Christ (for ought I know) to enter upon his work now, but they were only astonished, and understood not the indication, and therefore, like Moses, he retires into obscurity again, and they hear no more of him of many years after.

6. His mother talked with him privately about it; when the company broke up, she took him aside, and examined him about it, with a deal of tenderness and affection, ver. 48. Joseph and Mary were both amazed to find him there, and to find that he had so much respect shewed him, as to be admitted to sit among the doctors, and to be taken notice of. His father knew he had only the name of a father, and therefore said nothing. But (1.) His mother told him how ill they took it; Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Why didst thou put us into such a fright?

They were ready to say as Jacob of Joseph, a wild beast has devoured him; or he is fallen into the hands of some more cruel enemy, who at length found out that he was the young child, whose life Herod had sought some years ago; a thousand imaginations, we may suppose, they had concerning him, each more frightful than other. Now, why hast thou given us occasion for these fears? thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing; not only troubled that we lost thee, but vexed at ourselves that we did not take more care of thee, to bring thee along with us. Note, Those may have leave to complain of their losses, that think they have lost Christ; but their weeping did not hinder sewing; they did not sorrow, and sit down in despair, but sorrowed and sought. Note, If we would find Christ, we must seek him sorrowing, sorrowing that we have lost him, that we have provoked him to withdraw, and that we have sought him no sooner. They that thus seek him in sorrow, shall find him at length with so much the greater joy. (2.) He gently reproved their inordinate solicitude about him, ver. 49. How is it that ye sought me? You might have depended upon it, I would have followed you home when I had done the business I have to do here, I could not be lost in Jerusalem: Wist ye not that I ought to be, ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου, in my Father's house, so some read it; where else should the Son be, who abideth in the house for ever. I ought to be, (1.) Under my Father's care and protection, and therefore you should have cast the care of me upon him, and not have burthened yourselves with it. Christ is a shaft hid in his Father's quiver, Isa. xlix. 2. He takes care of his church likewise, and therefore let not us ever despair of its safety. (2.) At my Father's work; so we take it, I must be about my Father's business, and therefore could not go home so soon as you might. Wist ye not? Have you not already perceived that concerning me, that I have devoted myself to the service of religion, and therefore must employ myself in the affairs of it. Herein he hath left us an example, for it becomes the children of God, in conformity to Christ, to attend their heavenly Father's business, and to make all other business give way to it. This word of Christ we now think we understand very well, for he hath explained it in what he hath done, and said; it was his errand into the world, and his meat and drink in the world, to do his Father's will, and finish his work: And yet, at that time, his parents understood not this saying, ver. 50. They did not understand what business he had to do then in the temple for his Father: They believed him to be the Messiah, that should have the throne of his father David, but they thought that should rather bring him to the royal palace, than to the temple. They understood not his prophetic office; and he was to do much of his work in that.

Lastly, Here is their return to Nazareth. This glimpse of his glory was to be short, it was now over, and he did not urge his parents either to come and settle at Jerusalem, or to settle him there, though that was the place of improvement and preferment, and where he might have the best opportunities of shewing his wisdom; but very willingly retired into his obscurity at Nazareth, where, for many years, he was, as it were, buried alive. Doubtless, he came up to Jerusalem to worship at the feasts three times a year, but whether he ever went again into the temple, to dispute with the doctors there, we are not told; it is not improbable but he might. But here we are told,

1. That he was subject to his parents; though once, to shew that he was more than a man, he withdrew himself from his parents, to attend his heavenly Father's business, yet he did not, as yet, make that his constant practice, nor of many years after; but was subject to them, observed their orders, and went and came as they directed; and, as it should seem, worked with his father at the trade of a Carpenter. Herein he hath given an example to children to be dutiful, and obedient to their parents in the Lord. Being made of a woman, he was made under the law of the fifth commandment, to teach the seed of the faithful, thus to approve themselves to him a faithful seed. Though his parents were poor and mean, though his father, only his supposed father, yet he was subject to them; though he was strong in spirit, and filled with wisdom; nay, though he was the Son of God, yet he was subject to his parents; how then will they answer it, who, though foolish and weak, yet are disobedient to their parents?

2. That his mother, though she did not perfectly understand her Son's sayings, yet kept them in her heart, expecting that hereafter they would be explained to her, and she should fully understand them, and know how to make use of them. However, we may neglect mens sayings, because they are obscure, si non vis intelligi debes negligi, if it be not intelligible, it is not valuable, yet we must not think so of God's sayings. That which at first is dark, and we know not what to make of it, may afterwards become plain and easy; we should therefore lay it up for hereafter, see John ii. 22. we may find use for that another time, which now we see not how it can be made useful to us. A scholar keeps those grammar rules in memory, which at present he understands not the use of, because he is told, they will hereafter be of use to him, so we must do by Christ's sayings.

3. That he improved, and came on to admiration, ver. 52. He increased in wisdom and stature: in the perfections of his divine nature there could be no increase, but this is meant of his human nature, his body increased in stature and bulk, he grew



grew in the growing age; and his soul increased in wisdom, and in all the endowments of a human soul. Though the Eternal Word was united to the human soul from his conception, yet the divinity that dwelt in him manifested itself to his humanity by degrees, *ad modum recipientis*; as the faculties of his human soul grew more and more capable, the gifts it received from the divine nature were more and more communicated. And he increased in favour with God and man, i. e. in all those graces that rendered him acceptable both to God and man. Herein Christ accommodated himself to his estate of humiliation, that as he condescended to be an infant, a child, a youth, so the image of God shone brighter in him, when he grew up to be a youth, than it did, or could, while he was an infant and a child. Note, Young people as they grow in stature should grow in wisdom, and then as they grow in wisdom, they shall grow in favour with God and man.

## C H A P. III.

Nothing is related concerning our Lord Jesus from his twelfth year, to his entrance on his thirtieth year, we oft think it would have been a pleasure and advantage to us, if we had journals, or at least annals of occurrences concerning him; but we have as much as infinite wisdom thought fit to communicate to us, and if we improve not that, neither would we have improved more, if we had had it. The great intention of the evangelists was, to give us an account of the gospel of Christ, which we are to believe, and by which we hope for salvation: now that begun in the ministry and baptism of John, and therefore they hasten to give us an account of that. We could wish, perhaps, that Luke had wholly passed by what was related by Matthew and Mark, and had written only what was new, as he had done in his two first chapters: But it was the will of the Spirit, that some things should be established, not only out of the mouth of two, but of three witnesses, and we must not reckon it a needless repetition, nor will we do so, if we renew our meditations upon these things with suitable affections. In this chapter we have, (1.) The beginning of John's baptism, and the scope and intention of it, ver. 1—6. His exhortation to the multitude, ver. 7—9. And the particular instructions he gave to those who desired to be told their duty, ver. 10—14. (2.) The notice he gave them of the approach of the Messiah, ver. 15—18. to which is added (though it happened after what follows) the mention of his imprisonment, ver. 19, 20. (3.) Christ coming to be baptized of John, and his entrance therein upon the execution of his prophetic office, ver. 21, 22. (4.) His pedigree and genealogy recorded up to Adam, ver. 23—38.

1. **N**OW in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea, and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lyfaniæ the tetrarch of Abilene. 2. Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. 3. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; 4. As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; 6. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. 7. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8. Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 9. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 10. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? 11. He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. 12. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? 13. And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. 14. And the fol-

diers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

John's baptism introducing a new dispensation, it was requisite we should have a particular account of it. Glorious things were said of John, what a mighty favourite of heaven he should be, and what a great blessing to this earth, chap. i. 15; 17. But we lost him in the deserts, and there he remains until *the day of his shewing unto Israel*, chap. i. 80. And now at last that day dawns, and a welcome day it was to them that waited for it more than they that waited for the morning. Observe here;

First, The date of the beginning of John's baptism, when it was that he appeared; this is here taken notice of, which was not by the other evangelists, that the truth of the thing might be confirmed by the exact fixing of the time. And it is dated,

1. By the government of the heathen, which the Jews were under, to shew that they were a conquered people, and therefore it was time for the Messiah to come, to set up a spiritual kingdom, and an eternal one, upon the ruins of all the temporal dignity and dominion of David and Judah.

(1.) It is dated by the reign of the Roman emperor; it was in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar, the third of the twelve Cæsars, a very ill man, given to covetousness, drunkenness, and cruelty; such a man is mentioned first, (saith Dr. Lightfoot) as it were, to teach us what to look for from that cruel and abominable city, wherein Satan reigned in all ages and successions. The people of the Jews, after a long struggle, were of late made a province of the empire, and were under the dominion of this Tiberius; and that country, which, when time was, had made so great a figure, and had many nations tributaries to it, in the reigns of David and Solomon, is now itself an inconsiderable, despicable part of the Roman empire, and rather trampled upon than triumphed in; *en quo discordia cives perduxit miseros!* The law-giver was now departed from between Judah's feet; and as an evidence of that, their publick acts are dated by the reign of the Roman emperor, and therefore now Shiloh must come.

(2.) It is dated by the governments of the vice-roys that ruled in the several parts of the Holy Land, under the Roman emperor, which was another badge of their servitude, for they were all foreigners, which speaks a sad change with that people whose governors used to be of themselves, Jer. xxx. 21. and it was their glory. *How is the gold become dim!* (1.) Pilate is here said to be the governor, president, or procurator of Judea: this character is given of him by some other writers, that he was a wicked man, and one that made no conscience of a lye. He reigned ill, and at last was displaced by Vitellius, president of Syria, and sent to Rome to answer for his male-administrations. (2.) The other three are called *tetrarchs*, some think from the countries which they had the command of, each of them being over a fourth part of that which had been entirely under the government of Herod the great. Others think they are so called from the post of honour they were in in the government, they had the fourth place, or were fourth rate governors: the emperor was the first; the *proconsul* that governed a province the second, a king the third, and a *tetrarch* the fourth. So Dr. Lightfoot.

2. By the government of the Jews among themselves, to shew that they were a corrupt people, and therefore it was time the Messiah should come to reform them, ver. 2. Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests; God had appointed that there should be but one high priest at a time, but here were two to serve some ill turn or other, one served one year, and the other the other year, so some. One was the high priest, and the other the Sagan as the Jews called him, to officiate for him when he was disabled; or, as others say, one was high priest, and represented Aaron, and that was Caiaphas; Annas, the other was Nasi, or head of the Sanhedrin, and represented Moses. But to us there is but one High Priest, one Lord of all, to whom all judgment is committed.

Secondly, The original and tendency of John's baptism.

1. The original of it was from heaven; the word of the Lord came unto John, ver. 2. He received full commission, and full instructions from God to do what he did; it is the same expression that is used concerning the Old Testament prophets, Jer. i. 2. for John was a prophet, yea more than a prophet, and in him prophecy revived, which had been long suspended. We are not told how the word of the Lord came to John, whether by an angel, as to his father, or by dream, or vision, or voice; but it was to his satisfaction, and ought be to ours. John is here called the son of Zacharias, to refer us to what the angel said to his father, when he assured him he should have this son. The word of the Lord came to him in the wilderness, for those whom God fits he will find out wherever they are. As the word of the Lord is not bound in a prison, so it is not lost in a wilderness. The word of the Lord made its way to Ezekiel among the captives, by the river of Chebar, and to John in the isle Patmos. John was the son of a priest, now entering upon the thirtieth year of his age; and therefore, according to the custom of the temple,



he was now to be admitted into the temple-service, where he should have attended as a candidate five years before: but, God had called him to a more honourable ministry, and therefore the Holy Ghost enrolls him here, since he was not enrolled in the archives of the temple, *John the son of Zacharias began his ministration such a time.*

2. The scope and design of it was to bring all the people of his country off from their sins, and home to their God, *ver. 3.* He came first into all the country about Jordan, the neighbourhood wherein he resided, that part of the country which Israel took possession of first, when they entered the land of promise under Joshua's conduct, there was the banner of the gospel first displayed. John resided in the most solitary part of the country, but when the word of the Lord came to him, he quitted his deserts, and came into the inhabited country. Those that are *best pleased* in their retirements, must cheerfully *exchange* them when God calls them into places of concourse. He came out of the wilderness into all the country, with some marks of distinction, *preaching* a new baptism; not a sect, or party, but a *profession*, or distinguishing badge; the sign, or ceremony, such as was ordinarily used among the Jews, *washing with water*, by which profelytes were sometimes admitted, or disciples to some great master; but the meaning of it was *repentance for the remission of sins.* That is, all that submitted to his baptism,

1. Were thereby obliged to *repent of their sins*, to be sorry for what they had done amiss, and to go and *do so no more*; the former they *professed*, and were concerned to be *sincere* in their professions; the latter they *promised*, and were concerned to *make good* what they promised. He bound them not to such ceremonious observances as were imposed by the tradition of the elders, but to change their mind, and change their way, to *cast away from them all their transgressions*, and to *make them new hearts*, and to live new lives. The design of the gospel which now began, was to make men devout and pious, holy and heavenly, humble and meek, sober and chaste, just and honest, charitable and kind, and good in every relation, who had been much otherwise; and this is to *repent*.

2. They were thereby assured of the pardon of their sins, upon their repentance. As the baptism he administered, bound them not to submit to the power of sin, so it sealed to them a gracious and pleadable discharge from the guilt of sin. *Turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin*, agreeing with the word of the Lord, by the Old Testament prophets, *Ezek. xviii. 30.*

Thirdly, The fulfilling of the scripture, in the ministry of John. The other evangelists had referred us to the same text that is here referred to, that of *Esaïas, chap. xl. 3.* It is written in the book of the words of *Esaïas the prophet*, which he heard from God, which he spoke for God, those words of his which were written for the generations to come. Among them it is found, that there should be *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*, and John is that voice, a clear, distinct voice, a loud voice, and articulate one; he cries, *prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight.* John's business is to *make way* for the entertainment of the gospel in the hearts of people, to bring them into such a frame and temper, as that Christ might be welcome to them, and they welcome to Christ. Luke goes further on with the quotation, than Matthew and Mark had done, and applies the following words likewise to John's ministry, *ver. 5, 6.* *Every valley shall be filled.* Dr. Hammond understands this, as a prediction of the desolation coming upon the people of the Jews for their infidelity: the land should be made plain by the pioneers for the Roman army, and should be laid waste by it, and there should then be a visible distinction made between the impenitent on the one side, and the receivers of the gospel on the other side. But it seems rather to be meant, of the immediate tendency of John's ministry, and of the gospel of Christ, which that was the introduction of. (1.) The humble shall by it be *enriched* with grace, for *every valley* that lies *low* and *moist*, shall be *filled* and be *exalted.* (2.) The proud shall by it be *humbled*; the *self-confident* that stand upon *their own bottom*, and the *self-conceited* that lift up *their own top*, shall have contempt put upon them, for *every mountain and hill shall be brought low*; if they repent, they are brought to the dust; if not, to the lowest hell. (3.) Sinners shall be converted to God; for the *crooked ways*, and the *crooked spirits* shall be *made straight*; for though *none can make that straight, which God hath made crooked*, *Eccl. vii. 13.* yet God by his grace can make that straight which sin hath made crooked. (4.) Difficulties that were hindering and discouraging in the way to heaven, shall be removed; *the rough ways shall be made smooth*; and they that love God's law, shall have *great peace*, and *nothing shall offend them.* The gospel has made the way to heaven *plain* and *easy* to be *found*, *smooth* and *easy* to be *walked in.* (5.) The great salvation shall be more fully discovered than ever, and the discovery of it shall spread further, *ver. 6.* *all flesh shall see the salvation of God*; not the Jews only, but the Gentiles. All shall see it, *i. e.* they shall have it set before them, and offered to them, and some of all sorts shall see it, *i. e.* enjoy it, and have the benefit of it. When way is made for the gospel into the heart, by the captivating of high thoughts, and bringing them into obedience to Christ, by the levelling of the soul, and the removing of all obstructions that

stand in the way of Christ and his grace, then prepare to bid the salvation of God welcome.

Fourthly, The general warnings and exhortations, which he gave to those who submitted to his baptism, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* In Matthew he is said to have preached these same things to *many of the Pharisees and Sadducees* that came to his baptism, *Mat. iii. 7, 8, 9, 10.* but here he is said to have spoken them to *the multitude, that came forth to be baptized of him*, *ver. 7.* This was the purport of his preaching to all that came to him, and he did not alter it in compliment to the Pharisees and Sadducees when they came, but dealt as plainly with them as with any other of his hearers. And as he did not flatter the *great*, so neither did he compliment the *many*, or make his court to them, but gave the same reproofs of sin, and warnings of wrath to the *multitude*, that he did to the Sadducees and Pharisees; for if they had not the same faults, they had others as bad. Now observe here,

1. That the guilty, corrupted race of mankind is become a *generation of vipers*; not only poisoned, but poisonous; hateful to God, hating one another. This magnifies the patience of God, in continuing the race of mankind upon the earth, and not destroying that *nest of vipers.* He did once by water, and will again by fire.

2. This generation of vipers is fairly warned to *flee from the wrath to come*, which is certainly before them, if they continue such, and their being a *multitude* will not be at all their security, for it will be neither *reproach* nor *loss* to God to cut them off. We are not only warned of this wrath, but are put into a way to escape it, if we look about us in time.

3. There is no way of *fleeing from the wrath to come*, but by *repentance.* They that submitted to the baptism of repentance, thereby evidenced that they were *warned* to flee from the wrath to come, and *took* the warning; and we by our baptism profess to have fled out of Sodom, for fear of what is coming upon it.

4. Those that profess repentance, are highly concerned to live like penitents, *ver. 8.* *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*, else, notwithstanding your professions of repentance, you cannot escape *the wrath to come.* By the fruits of repentance it will be known whether it be sincere or no. By the change of our way, must be evidenced the change of our mind.

5. If we be not really holy both in heart and life, our profession of religion and relation to God and his church will stand us in no stead at all. *Begin not now to frame excuses* from this great duty of repentance, by *saying within yourselves we have Abraham to our father*, what will it avail us to be the children of godly parents, if we be not godly? to be within the pale of the church, if we be not brought into the bond of the covenant?

6. We have therefore no reason to depend upon our external privileges and professions of religion, because God has no need of us or of our services, but can effectually secure his own honour, and interest without us. If we were cut off and ruined, he could raise up to himself a church out of the most unlikely; *children to Abraham, even out of stones.*

7. The greater professions we make of repentance, and the greater assistances and encouragements are given us in repentance, the nearer and the forer will our destruction be, if we do not *bring forth fruits meet for repentance.* Now the gospel begins to be preached, now the kingdom of heaven is at hand, *now the ax is laid to the root of the tree*, threatenings to the wicked and impenitent are now more terrible than before, as encouragements to the penitent are now more comfortable. Now you are upon your behaviour, look to yourselves.

8. Barren trees will be cast into the fire at length, it is the fittest place for them. *Every tree* that doth not bring forth fruit, *good fruit*, is *hewn down* and *cast into the fire.* If it serve not for fruit to the honour of God's grace, let it serve for fuel to the honour of his justice.

Fifthly, The particular instructions he gave to several sorts of persons, that enquired of him concerning their duty; the *people*, the *publicans* and the *soldiers.* Some of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism, but we do not find them asking, *What shall we do?* For they thought they knew what they had to do, as well as he could tell them; or were determined to do what they pleased, whatever he told them. But the *people*, the *publicans* and the *soldiers*, that knew they had done amiss, and knew they should do better, and were conscious to themselves of great ignorance, and unacquaintedness with the divine law, were particularly inquisitive, *What shall we do?* Note, 1. Those that are *baptized* must be *taught*, and those that have baptized them, are concerned as they have opportunity, to teach them, *Mat. xxviii. 19, 20.* 2. Those that profess and promise repentance in general, must evidence it by particular instances of reformation, according as their place and condition is. 3. They that would do their duty, must desire to know their duty, and enquire concerning it. The first good word Paul said when he was converted was, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* These here require, not *what shall this man do*, but *what shall we do?* *what fruits meet for repentance shall we bring forth?* Now John gives answer to each, according to their place and station.



1. He tells the people their duty, and that is to be charitable, *ver. 11. He that has two coats, and consequently one to spare, let him give, or lend at least, to him that has none, to keep him warm.* Perhaps he saw among his hearers, some that were overloaded with clothes, while others were ready to perish in rags, and he puts those who had superfluities upon contributing to the relief of those that had not necessities. The gospel requires *mercy*, and not sacrifice, and the design of it is, to engage us to do all the good we can. *Food and raiment* are the two supports of life, he that hath *meat* to spare, let him give to him that is destitute of *daily food*, as well as he that has clothes to spare: what we have, we are but stewards of, and must use it accordingly, as our Master directs.

2. He tells the publicans their duty, the collectors of the emperor's revenue, *ver. 13. Exact no more than that which is appointed you.* They must do justice between the government and the merchant, and not oppress the people in levying the taxes, nor any way make them heavier, or more burthensome than the law had made them. They must not think, that because it was their office to take care that the people did not defraud the prince, they might therefore, by the power they had, bear hard upon the people; as those that have never so little a branch of power, are apt to abuse it; no, keep to your *book of rates*, and reckon it enough that you collect for Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and do not enrich yourselves by taking more. The publick revenues must be applied to the publick service, and not to gratify the avarice of private persons. Observe, He doth not direct the publicans to quit their places, and to go no more to the receipt of custom, the employment is in itself lawful, and necessary, but let them be just and honest in it.

3. He tells the soldiers their duty, *ver. 14.* Some think these soldiers were of the Jewish nation and religion, others think they were Romans; for it was not likely, either that the Jews would serve the Romans, or the Romans trust the Jews in their garrisons, in their own nation; and then it is an early instance of Gentiles embracing the gospel, and submitting to it. Military men seldom seem inclined to religion, yet these submitted even to the Baptist's strict profession, and desired to receive the *word of command* from him, *What must we do?* Those who more than other men have their lives in their hands, and are in deaths oft, are concerned to enquire what they shall do that they may be *found in peace*. In answer to this enquiry, John doth not bid them lay down their arms, and desert the service; but cautions them against the sins that soldiers were commonly guilty of; for this is fruit meet for repentance, to *keep ourselves from our iniquity*. (1.) They must not be injurious to the people among whom they were quartered, and over whom indeed they were set, *do violence to no man*. Your business is to keep the peace, and prevent mens doing violence to one another, but do not you *do violence* to any; *shake no man*, so the word signifies: do not put people into fear; for the sword of war as well as that of justice, is to be a terror only to evil doers, but a protection to those that do well. Be not rude in your quarters; force not money from people, by frightening them. Shed not the blood of war, in peace; offer no incivility either to man or woman; nor have any hand in the barbarous devastations that armies sometimes make. Nor must they *accuse any falsely* to the government, thereby to make themselves formidable, and get bribes. (2.) They must not be injurious to their fellow soldiers; for some think that caution, not to *accuse falsely*, has special reference to them: be not forward to complain one of another to your superior officers, that you may be revenged on those you have a pique against, or undermine those above you, and get into their places. Do not oppress any, so some think the word here signifies, as used by the LXX. in several passages of the Old Testament. (3.) They must not be given to mutiny, nor contend with their general about their pay, *be content with your wages*. While you have what you agreed for, do not murmur that it is not more. It is discontent with what they have, that makes men oppressive and injurious; they that never think they have enough themselves, will not stick at any the most irregular practices, to make it more, by defrauding others. It is a rule to all servants, that they *be content with their wages*, for they that indulge themselves in discontents, expose themselves to many temptations, and it is wisdom to make the best of that which is.

15. And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not; 16. John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the holy Ghost, and with fire. 17. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. 18. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people. 19. But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philips wife, and for

all the evils which Herod had done, 20. Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

We are now drawing near to the appearance of our Lord Jesus publicly; the sun will not be long after the morning-star. We are here told,

First, How the people took occasion, from the ministry and baptism of John, to think of the Messiah; and to think of him as at the door, as now come. Thus the way of the Lord was prepared, and people were prepared to bid Christ welcome; for when mens expectations are raised, that which they are in expectation of, becomes doubly acceptable. Now when they observed what an excellent doctrine John Baptist preached, what a divine power went along with it, and what a tendency it had to reform the world,

1. They began presently to consider, that now was the time for the Messiah to appear; the scepter was departed from Judah, for they had no king but Cæsar, nay and the law-giver too was gone from between his feet, for Herod had lately slain the Sanhedrin; Daniel's seventy weeks were now expiring, and therefore it was but three or four years after this, that they looked that the kingdom of heaven should appear presently, *Luke xix. 11.* Never did the corrupt state of the Jews more need a reformation, nor their distressed state more need a deliverance, than now.

2. Their next thought was, Is not this he that should come? All thinking men mused, or reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether he were the Christ or not. He had indeed nothing of that external pomp and grandeur in which they generally expected the Messiah to appear, but his life was holy and strict, his preaching powerful and with authority, and therefore why may we not think him to be the Messiah, and that he will shortly throw off this disguise, and appear in more glory? Note, That which puts people upon considering, reasoning with themselves, prepares the way for Christ.

Secondly, How John disowned all pretensions to the honour of being himself the Messiah, but confirmed them in their expectations of him that really was the Messiah, *ver. 16, 17.* John's office, as a cryer or herald, was to give notice that the kingdom of God, and the King of that kingdom, was at hand; and therefore, when he had told all manner of people severally, what they must do, you must do this, and you must do that; he tells them one thing more, which they must all do, they must expect the Messiah now shortly to appear. And this serves as an answer to their musings and debates concerning himself. Though he knew not their thoughts, yet in declaring this he answered them.

1. He declares, the utmost he could do was to baptize them with water; he had no access to the Spirit, nor could command that, or work upon that; he could only oblige them to repent, and assure them of forgiveness upon repentance; he could not work repentance in them, nor confer remission on them.

2. He consigns them, and turns them over as it were to Jesus Christ; for whom he was sent to prepare the way, and to whom he was ready to transfer all the interest he had in the affections of the people, and would have them no longer to debate whether John was the Messiah or no, but to look for him that was really so.

1. John owns the Messiah to have a greater excellency than he had; and that he was in all things preferable to him; he is one, the latchet of whose shoe he doth not think himself worthy to unloose; he doth not think himself worthy to be the meanest of his servants, to help him on and off with his shoes, John was a prophet, yea more than a prophet, more so than any of the Old Testament prophets; but Christ was a prophet more than John, for it was both by the Spirit of Christ and to the grace of Christ, that all the prophets prophesied, and John among the rest, *1 Pet. i. 10, 11.* This was a great truth, which John came to preach, but the manner of his expressing it speaks his humility, and in it he not only doth justice to our Lord Jesus, but doth him honour: He is one I am not worthy to approach, or draw nigh to, no not as a servant. Thus highly doth it always become us to speak of Christ, and thus humbly of ourselves.

2. He owns him to have a greater energy than he had. He is mightier than I, and doth that which I cannot do, both for the comfort of the faithful, and for the terror of hypocrites and dissemblers. They thought a wonderful power went along with John, but what was that compared with the power which Jesus would come clothed with. (1.) John can do no more but baptize with water, in token of this, that they ought to purify and cleanse themselves; but Christ can and will baptize with the holy Ghost; he can give the Spirit to cleanse and purify the heart not only as water washes off the dirt on the outside, but as fire purges out the dross that is within, and melts down the metal that it may be cast into a new mold. (2.) John can only preach a distinguishing doctrine, and by word and sign separate between the precious and the vile; but Christ hath his fan in his hand, with which he can and will perfectly part between the wheat and the chaff, he will thoroughly purge his floor, it is his own, and therefore he will purge it, and will cast out of his church the unbelieving, impenitent



impenitent Jews, and confirm in his church all that faithfully follow him. (3.) John can only *speake comfort* to those that receive the gospel, and, like other prophets, *say to the righteous that it shall be well with them*; but Jesus Christ will *give them comfort*. John can only promise them they shall be safe, but Christ will make them so, he will *gather the wheat into his garner*: good, serious, solid people he will gather now into his church on earth, which shall be made up of such, and he will shortly gather them into his church in heaven, where they shall be for ever sheltered. (4.) John can only *threaten* hypocrites, and tell the *barren trees* that they shall be *hewn down and cast into the fire*; but Christ can execute that threatening; those that are as *chaff*, light and vain, and worthless, *he will burn with fire unquenchable*. John refers here to *Mal. iii. 18. —iv. 1, 2. Then when the floor is purged, ye shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, for the day comes that shall burn as an oven.*

The evangelist concludes his account of John's preaching, with an *et cætera*, ver. 18. *Many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people*, which are not recorded. (1.) John was an affectionate preacher; he was *παρακαλῶν*, *exhorting*, beseeching, he pressed things home upon his hearers, followed his doctrine close, as one in earnest. (2.) He was a *practical* preacher, much of his preaching was *exhortation*, quickening them to their duty, and directing them in it, and not amusing them with matters of nice speculation. (3.) He was a *popular* preacher, though he had scribes and Pharisees, men of polite learning, attending his ministry, and Sadducees, men of *free thought*, as they pretended, yet he addressed himself to the *people*, *πρὸς τὸν λαόν*, to the *laity*, and accommodated himself to their capacity, as promising himself best success among them. (4.) He was an *evangelical* preacher, for so the word here used signifies, *εὐηγγελίζετο*, he *preached the gospel* to the people; in all his *exhortations* he directed people to Christ, and excited and encouraged their expectations of him. When we press duty upon people, we must direct them to Christ both for righteousness and strength. (5.) He was a *copious* preacher; *many other things he preached*, *πολλὰ μὲν καὶ ἕτερα*, many things and different. He preached a great deal, shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God; and he *varied* in his preaching, that those who were not reached, and touched, and wrought upon by one truth, might by another.

Thirdly, How a full stop was put to John's preaching, when he was in the midst of his usefulness, going on thus successfully, he was imprisoned by the malice of Herod, ver. 19, 20. *Herod the tetrarch being reproved by him*, not only for living in incest with his brother Philip's wife, but for the many other *evils which Herod had done*; for those that are wicked in one instance, are commonly so in many other; he could not *bear it*, but contracted an antipathy to him for his plain dealing, and *added this wickedness to all the rest*, which was indeed *above all*, that he *shut up John in prison*; put that burning and shining light under a bushel: Because he could not bear his reproofs, others should be deprived of the benefit of his instructions and counsels. Some little good he might do to those who had access to him, when he was in prison; but nothing to what he might have done, if he had had liberty to go about all the country as he had done. We cannot think of Herod's doing this, without the greatest compassion and lamentation; nor of God's permitting it, without admiring the depth of the divine counsels, which we cannot account for; must he be silenced, who is the *voice of one crying in the wilderness*? Must such a preacher be shut up in prison, who ought to have been set up in the courts of the temple? But thus the faith of his disciples must be tried, the unbelief of those who rejected him must be punished. Thus he must be Christ's forerunner in suffering as well as preaching, and thus having been for about a year and half preparing people for Christ, he must now give way to him, and the sun being risen, the morning-star must of course disappear.

21. Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened: 22. And the holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased. 23. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, 24. Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph, 25. Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Nagge, 26. Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Judah, 27. Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of

Salathiel, which was the son of Neri, 28. Which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er, 29. Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, 30. Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim, 31. Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David, 32. Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson, 33. Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda, 34. Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor, 35. Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala, 36. Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech, 37. Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan, 38. Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

The evangelist mentioned John's imprisonment before Christ's being baptized, though it was near a year after it, because he would finish the story of John's ministry, and then introduce that of Christ. Now here we have,

First, A short account of Christ's baptism, which had been more fully related by St. Matthew. Jesus came to be baptized of John, and he was so, ver. 21, 22.

1. It is here said, that *when all the people were baptized*, then *Jesus was baptized*; all that were then present; Christ would be baptized last, among the common people, and in the rear of them; thus he humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, as one of the least, nay, as less than the least. He saw what multitudes were hereby prepared to receive him, and then he appeared.

2. Notice is here taken of Christ's *praying* when he was *baptized*, which was not in Matthew; being baptized and *praying*. He did not *confess sin* as others did, for he had none to confess, but he *prayed* as others did, for he would thus keep up communion with his Father. Note, The inward and spiritual grace, which sacraments are the outward and visible signs of, must be fetched in by prayer; and therefore prayer must always accompany them. We have reason to think that Christ now prayed for this manifestation of God's favour to him, which immediately followed; he prayed for the discovery of his Father's favour to him, and the descent of the Spirit. What was promised to Christ, he must obtain by prayer; *Ask of me, and I will give thee*, &c. thus he would put an honour upon prayer, would tie us to it, and encourage us in it.

3. When he prayed, *the heaven was opened*; he that by his power parted the waters, to make a way through them to Canaan, now by his power parted the air, another fluid element, to open a correspondence with the heavenly Canaan. Thus was there opened to Christ, and by him to us, *a new and living way into the holiest*; sin had shut up heaven, but Christ's prayer opened it again. Prayer is an ordinance that *opens heaven*; *knock and it shall be opened to you*.

4. The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove, upon him; our Lord Jesus was now to receive greater measures of the Spirit than before, to qualify him for his prophetic office, *Isa. lxi. 1. When he begins to preach, the Spirit of the Lord is upon him*. Now this is here expressed by a sensible evidence for his encouragement in his work, and for the satisfaction of John Baptist, for he was told before, that by this sign it should be notified to him, which was the Christ. Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, that he might be revealed to be a personal substance, and not merely an operation of the Godhead: And thus (saith he) was made a full, clear and sensible demonstration of the Trinity, at the beginning of the gospel, and very fitly is this done at Christ's baptism, who was to make the ordinance of baptism a badge of the profession of that faith, in the doctrine of the Trinity, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*.

5. There



5. There came a voice from heaven, from God the Father, from the excellent glory, so it is expressed, 2 Pet. i. 17. *Thou art my beloved Son.* Here and in Mark it is expressed as spoken to Christ; in Matthew, as spoken of him, *this is my beloved Son.* It comes all to one, it was intended to be a notification to John, and, as such, properly expressed by *this is my beloved Son*; and likewise an answer to his prayer, and so it is most fitly expressed by *thou art.* It was foretold concerning the Messiah, *I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son*, 2 Sam. vii. 14. *I will make him my first-born*, Psal. lxxxix. 27. that he should be God's elect, in whom his soul delighted, Isa. xlii. 1. and accordingly it is here declared, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Secondly, A long account of Christ's pedigree, which had been more briefly related by St. Matthew. Here is,

1. His age. He now began to be about thirty years of age. So old Joseph was when he stood before Pharaoh, Gen. xli. 46. David when he began to reign, 2 Sam. v. 4. and at this age the priests were to enter upon the full execution of their office, Numb. iv. 3. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it is plain, by the manner of expression here, that he was just twenty-nine years old complete, and entering upon his thirtieth year, in the month Tisri, after this he lived three years and a half, and died when he was thirty two years old and a half. *Three years and a half*, the time of Christ's ministry, is a period of time very remarkable in scripture; *three years and six months* the heavens were shut up, in Elijah's time, Luke iv. 25. Jam. v. 17. This was the half week, in which the Messiah was to confirm the covenant, Dan. ii. 27. This period is expressed in the prophetic writings by a time, times, and half a time, Dan. xii. 7. Rev. xii. 14. and by forty two months, and a thousand two hundred and threescore days, Rev. xi. 2, 3. where it is the time fixed for the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, in conformity to Christ's preaching in his humiliation just so long.

2. His pedigree, ver. 23, &c. Matthew had given us somewhat of this, he goes no higher than Abraham, but Luke brings it as high as Adam; Matthew designed to shew that Christ was the son of Abraham, in whom *all the families of the earth are blessed*, and that he was heir to the throne of David, and therefore he begins with Abraham, and brings the genealogy down to Jacob, who was the father of Joseph, an heir male of the house of David; but Luke, designing to shew that Christ was the seed of the woman, that should break the serpent's head, traceth his pedigree upwards, as high as Adam, and begins it with Eli, or Heli, who was the father not of Joseph, but of the virgin Mary. And some suggest, That the supply which our translators all along insert here, is not right, and that it should not be read *which*, i. e. which Joseph was the son of Heli, but which Jesus; he was *the son of Joseph, of Eli, of Matthat, &c.* And he, i. e. Jesus, was the son of Seth, of Adam, of God, ver. 38. The difference between the two evangelists in the genealogy of Christ, has been a stumbling-block to infidels that cavil at the word; but such a one as has been removed by the labours of learned men, both in the early ages of the church, and in latter times, to which we refer ourselves. Matthew draws the pedigree from Solomon, whose natural line ending in Jechonias, the legal right was transferred to Salathiel, who was of the house of Nathan, another son of David, which line Luke here pursues, and so leaves out all the kings of Judah. It is well for us that our salvation doth not depend upon our being able to solve all these difficulties, nor is the divine authority of the gospels at all weakened by them; for the evangelists are not supposed to write these genealogies, either of their own knowledge, or by divine inspiration, but to have copied them out of the authentick records, of the genealogies among the Jews, the heralds books, which therefore they were obliged to follow; and in them they found the pedigree of Jacob, the father of Joseph, to be as it is set down in Matthew; and the pedigree of Heli, the father of Mary, to be as it is set down here in Luke; and this is the meaning of *ὡς ἐνομίζετο*, ver. 23. *not as it was supposed*, referring only to Joseph, but *ut sancitum est lege*, as it is entered into the books, as we find it upon record, by which it appeared, that Jesus was, both by father and mother's side, the son of David, witness this extract out of their own records, which any one might at that time have liberty to compare with the original, and further the evangelist needed not to go; nay, had they varied from that, they had not gained their point. And its not being contradicted at that time, is satisfaction enough to us now, that it is a true copy; as it is further worthy our observing, that when those records of the Jewish genealogies had continued thirty or forty years after these extracts out of them, long enough to justify the evangelists therein, they were all lost and destroyed with the Jewish state and nation, for now there was no more occasion for them.

Here is one difficulty occurs between Abraham and Noah, which gives us some perplexity, ver. 35, 36. Sala is said to be the son of Cainan, and he the son of Arphaxad, whereas Sala was the son of Arphaxad, Gen. x. 24.—xi. 12. and there is no such man as Cainan found there. But as to that, it is sufficient to say, that the Seventy Interpreters, who before our Saviour's time translated the Old Testament into Greek, for reasons best known to themselves, inserted that Cainan; and St. Luke, writing among

the Hellenist Jews, was obliged to make use of that translation, and therefore to take it as he found it.

The genealogy concludes with this, *who was the son of Adam, the Son of God.* (1.) Some refer it to Adam, he was, in a peculiar manner, the Son of God, being more immediately than any of his off-spring, the off-spring of God by creation. (2.) Others refer it to Christ, and so make the last words of this genealogy, to speak his divine and human nature: He was both, the son of Adam, and the Son of God, that he might be a proper mediator between God, and the sons of Adam, and might bring the sons of Adam to be, through him, the sons of God.

## C H A P. IV.

*We left Christ newly baptized, and owned by a voice from heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him. Now in this chapter we have,* 1. *A further preparation of him for his publick ministry, by his being tempted in the wilderness, which we had the same account of before in Matthew, which we have here.* (2.) *His entrance upon his publick work in Galilee, ver. 14, 15. particularly,* (1.) *At Nazareth, the city where he had been bred up, ver. 16—30. which we had no account of before in Matthew.* (2.) *At Capernaum, where having preached to admiration, ver. 31, 32. he cast the devil out of a man that was possessed, ver. 33—37. Cured Peter's mother-in-law of a fever, ver. 38, 39. And many others that were sick, and possessed, ver. 40, 41. And then went and did the same in other cities of Galilee, ver. 42—44.*

1. **A**ND Jesus being full of the holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the spirit into the wilderness, 2. Being forty days tempted of the devil; and in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungred. 3. And the devil said unto him, if thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. 4. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. 5. And the devil taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. 7. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. 8. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 9. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence. 10. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee. 11. And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 12. And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. 13. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

The last words of the foregoing chapter, that Jesus was the son of Adam, speak him to be the seed of the woman; being so, we have him here, according to the promise, *breaking the serpent's head*, baffling and foiling the devil in all his temptations, who, by one temptation, had baffled and foiled our first parents. Thus in the beginning of the war, he made reprisals upon him, and conquered the conqueror.

In this story of Christ's temptation observe,

First, How he was prepared and fitted for it. He that designed him the trial, furnished him accordingly; for tho' we know not what exercises may be before us, nor what encounters we may be reserved for, Christ did, and was provided accordingly; and God doth for us, and we hope will provide accordingly.

1. He was full of the Holy Ghost, who had descended on him like a dove, had now greater measures of the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Holy Ghost, than ever before. Note, those are well armed against the strongest temptations, that are full of the Holy Ghost.

2. He was newly returned from Jordan, where he was baptized, and owned, by a voice from heaven, to be the beloved Son of God, and thus he was prepared for this combat. Note,



When we have had the most comfortable communion with God, and the clearest discoveries of his favour to us, we may expect, that Satan will set upon us; the richest ship is the pirate's prize; and that God will suffer him to do so, that the power of his grace may be manifested and magnified.

3. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, by the good Spirit, who led him as a champion into the field, to fight the enemy that he was sure to conquer. His being led into the wilderness, (1.) Gave some advantage to the tempter, for there he had him alone, no friend with him, by whose prayers and advice he might be assisted in the hour of temptation. *Wo to him that is alone!* He might give Satan advantage, who knew his own strength, we may not, who know our own weakness. (2.) He gained some advantage to himself, during his forty days fasting in the wilderness, we may suppose that he was wholly taken up in proper meditation, and in the consideration of his own undertaking, and the work he had before him, that he spent all this time in immediate, intimate converse with his Father, as Moses in the mount, without any diversion, distraction, or interruption. Of all the days of Christ's life in the flesh, these seem to come nearest to the angelic perfection, and the heavenly life, and this prepared him for Satan's assaults, and hereby he was fortified against them.

4. He continued fasting, ver. 2. *In those days he did eat nothing.* This fast was altogether miraculous, like those of Moses, and Elijah, and shews him to be like them, a prophet sent of God; it is probable, it was in the wilderness of Horeb, the same wilderness in which Moses and Elijah fasted. As by retiring into the wilderness, he shewed himself perfectly indifferent to the world, so by this fasting, he shewed himself perfectly indifferent to the body, and Satan cannot easily take hold of those who are thus loosened from, and dead to, the world and the flesh. The more we keep under the body, and bring it into subjection, the less advantage Satan has against us.

Secondly, How he was assaulted by one temptation after another, and how he defeated the design of the tempter, in every assault, and became more than a conqueror. During the forty days he was tempted of the devil, ver. 2. not by any inward suggestions, for the prince of this world had nothing in Christ, by which to inject any such, but by outward solicitations, perhaps in the likeness of a serpent, as he tempted our first parents. But, at the end of the forty days, he came nearer him, and did as it were close with him; when he perceived that he was an hungred, ver. 2. Probably our Lord Jesus then began to look about among the trees, to see if he could find any thing that was eatable, from whence the devil took occasion to make the following proposal to him.

1. He tempted him to distrust his Father's care of him, and to set up for himself, and shift for provision for himself in such a way, as his Father had not appointed for him, ver. 3. *If thou be the Son of God, as the voice from heaven declared, command this stone to be made bread.* (1.) I counsel thee to do it, for God, if he be thy Father, has forgotten thee, and it will be long enough ere he sends either ravens or angels to feed thee. If we begin to think of being our own carvers, and of living by our own forecast, without depending upon divine providence, of getting wealth by our might, and the power of our hands; we must look upon it as a temptation of Satan's, and reject it accordingly; it is Satan's counsel to think of an independency upon God. (2.) I challenge thee to do it, if thou canst; if thou dost not do it, I will say thou art not the Son of God; for John Baptist said lately, *That God is able of stones to raise up children to Abraham*, which is the greater; thou therefore hast not the power of the Son of God, if thou dost not of stones make bread for thyself when thou needest it, which is the lesser. Thus was God himself tempted in the wilderness; *Can he furnish a table? Can he give bread?* Psal. lxxviii. 19, 20.

Now, 1. Christ yielded not to the temptation; he would not turn that stone into bread, no, not though he was hungry; (1.) Because he would not do what Satan bid him do, for that would have looked, as if there had been indeed a compact between him and the prince of the devils. Note, We must not do any thing that looks like giving place to the devil; miracles were wrought for the confirming of faith, and the devil had no faith to be confirmed, and therefore he would not do it for him. He did his signs in the presence of his disciples, John xx. 30. and particularly the beginning of his miracles, turning water into wine, which he did that his disciples might believe on him, John ii. 11. but here in the wilderness he had no disciples with him. (2.) He wrought miracles for the ratification of his doctrine; and therefore, till he began to preach, he would not begin to work miracles. (3.) He would not work miracles for himself, and his own supply, lest he should seem impatient of hunger, whereas he came not to please himself, but to suffer grief, and that grief among others; and because he would shew that he pleased not himself, he would rather turn water into wine, for the credit and convenience of his friends, than stones into bread, for his own necessary supply. (4.) He would reserve the proof of his being the Son of God for hereafter, and would rather be upbraided by Satan, with being weak and not able to do it, than be persuaded by Satan to do that which it was not fit for him to do; thus he was upbraided by his enemies, as if he could not save himself, and come down from

the cross, when he could have come down, but would not, because it was not fit he should. (5.) He would not do any thing that looked like distrust of his Father, or acting separately from him, or any thing disagreeable to his present state. Being in all things made like unto his brethren, he would, like other the children of God, live in a dependence upon the divine providence and promise, and trust him, either to send him supply into the wilderness, or lead him to a city of habitation, where there was supply, as he used to do, Psal. cvii. 5, 6, 7. and in the mean time would support him, though he was hungry, as he had done these forty days past.

2. He returned a scripture answer to it, ver. 4. *It is written.* This is the first word recorded, as spoken by Christ, after his instalment in his prophetic office, and it is a quotation out of the Old Testament, to shew that he came to assert and maintain the authority of the scripture, as uncontrollable, even by Satan himself: And though he had the Spirit without measure, and had a doctrine of his own to preach, and a religion to found, yet it agreed with Moses and the prophets, whose writings he therefore lays down as a rule to himself, and recommends to us, as a reply to Satan and his temptations; the word of God is our sword, and faith in that word is our shield; we should therefore be mighty in the scriptures, and go in that might, go forth, and go on in our spiritual warfare. Know what is written, for it is for our learning, for our use. The text of scripture he makes use of, is quoted from Deut. viii. 3. *Man shall not live by bread alone; I need not turn the stone into bread, for God can send manna for my nourishment, as he did for Israel; man can live by every word of God, i. e. by whatever God will appoint that he shall live.* How had Christ lived, lived comfortably, these forty days last past? not by bread, but by the word of God, by meditation upon that word, and communion with it, and with God, in, and by it; and in like manner he could live yet, though now he began to be an hungred. God has many ways of providing for his people, without the ordinary means of subsistence, and therefore he is not at any time to be distrusted, but at all times to be depended upon in the way of duty. If meat be wanting, God can take away the appetite, or give such degrees of patience, as will enable a man even to laugh at destruction and famine, Job v. 22. or make pulse and water more nourishing, than all the portion of the king's meat, Dan. i. 12, 13. and enable his people to rejoice in the Lord, when the fig-tree doth not blossom, Hab. i. 12, 13. She was an active believer, that said, she had made many a meal's meat of the promises, when she wanted bread.

2. He tempted him to accept from him the kingdom, which, as the Son of God, he expected to receive from his Father, and to do him homage for it, ver. 5, 7, 8. This evangelist put this temptation second, which Matthew had put last, and which, it should seem, was really the last; but Luke was full of it, as the blackest and most violent, and therefore hastened to it. In the devil's tempting our first parents, he represented to them the forbidden fruit, first as good for food, and then as pleasant to the eyes, and they were overpowered by both these charms: Satan here first tempted Christ to turn the stones into bread, which would be good for food, and then shewed him the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, which was pleasant to the eyes; but in both these he overpowered Satan, and, perhaps, with an eye to that Luke changeth the order. Now observe,

1. How Satan managed this temptation, to prevail with Christ to become a tributary to him, and to receive his kingdom, by delegation from him.

(1.) He gave him a prospect of all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, an airy representation of them, such as he thought most likely to strike the fancy, and seem a real prospect; and, to humour the thing, he took him up, for this purpose, into a high mountain; and because we next, after the temptation, find Christ on the other side Jordan, some think it probable, that it was to the top of Pisgah that the devil took him, from whence Moses had a sight of Canaan. And that it was but a phantasm, that the devil here presented our Saviour with, as the prince of the power of the air, is confirmed by that circumstance, which Luke here takes notice of, that it was done in a moment of time; whereas, if a man take a prospect of but one country, he must do it successively, must turn himself round, and take a view first of one part, and then of another. Thus the devil thought to impose upon our Saviour with a fallacy, a *deceptio visus*; and by making him believe that he could shew him all the kingdoms of the world, would draw him into an opinion, that he could give him all those kingdoms.

(2.) He boldly alledged, that these kingdoms were all delivered to him, that he had power to dispose of them, and all their glory, and to give it to whomsoever he would, ver. 6. Some think therein he pretended to be an angel of light, and that as one of the angels that was set over the kingdoms, he had bought out, or fought out all the rest, and so was intrusted with the disposal of them all; and in God's name, would give them him, knowing they were designed for him; but clogged with this condition, that he should fall down and worship him; which a good angel would have been so far from demanding, that he would not have admitted it, no, not upon shewing much greater things than these, as appears, Rev. xiv. 10.—xxii. 9. But I rather take it, that he claimed



aimed this power as Satan, and as *delivered to him*, not by the Lord, but by the kings and people of these kingdoms, who gave their power and honour to the devil, *Eph. ii. 2.* Hence he is called the *god of this world*, and the *prince of this world*. It was promised to the Son of God, that he should have *the heathen for his inheritance*, *Psal. ii. 8.* Why, saith the devil, the heathen are mine, are my subjects and votaries; but however, they shall be mine, I will give them *thee*, upon condition that thou *worship me* or them, and say they are the *rewards which I have given thee*, as others have done before *thee*, *Hof. ii. 12.* and consent to have, and *hold them, by, from, and under me.*

(3.) He demanded of him homage and adoration. *If thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine*, *ver. 7.* (1.) He would have him worship him himself; perhaps he doth not mean so as never to worship God, but let him worship him in conjunction with God; for the devil knows, if he can but once come in a partner, he shall soon be sole proprietor. (2.) He would indent with him, that when, according to the promise made to him, he had got possession of the kingdoms of this world, he should make no alteration of religions in them, but permit and suffer the nations as they had done hitherto, to *sacrifice to devils*, *1 Cor. x. 20.* That he should still keep up *dæmon worship* in the world, and then let him take all the power and glory of the kingdoms if he pleased. Let who will take the wealth and grandeur of this earth, Satan has all he would have, if he can but have mens hearts and affections, and adorations; can but *work in the children of disobedience*, for then he effectually *devours them.*

2. How our Lord Jesus *triumphed* over this temptation. He gave it a peremptory repulse, rejected it with abhorrence, *ver. 8.* *Get thee behind me, Satan, I cannot bear the mention of it; What! worship the enemy of God, whom I came to serve? And of man, whom I came to save? No, I will never do it; such a temptation as this, was not to be reasoned with, but immediately refused; it was presently knocked on the head with one word, It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; and not only so, but him only, him and no other. And therefore Christ will not worship Satan, nor when he has the kingdoms of the world delivered to him by his Father, as he expects shortly to have, will he suffer any remains of the worship of the devil to continue in them: No, it shall be perfectly rooted out and abolished wherever his gospel comes: He will make no composition with him, polytheism and idolatry must go down, as Christ's kingdom gets up: Men must be turned from the power of Satan unto God, from the worship of devils, to the worship of the only living and true God; this is the great divine law that Christ will re-establish among men, and by his holy religion reduce men to the obedience of, That God only is to be served and worshipped; and therefore whoever set up any creature as the object of religious worship, though it were a saint, or an angel, or the virgin Mary herself, they directly thwart Christ's design, and relapse into heathenism.*

3. He tempted him to be his own murderer, in a presumptuous confidence of his Father's protection, such as he had no warrant for. Observe,

1. What he designed in this temptation: *If thou be the Son of God, cast thy self down*, *ver. 4.* (1.) He would have him seek for a new proof of his being the *Son of God*, as if that which his Father had given him by the voice from heaven, and the descent of the Spirit upon him, were not sufficient, which would have been a dishonour to God, as if he had not chosen the most proper way of giving him the assurance of it; and it would have argued a distrust of the Spirit's dwelling in him, which was the great and most convincing proof to himself of his being the *Son of God*, *Heb. i. 8, 9.* (2.) He would have him seek a new method of proclaiming and publishing this to the world. The devil in effect suggests, That it was in an *obscure corner* that he was attested to be the Son of God, among a company of ordinary people who attended John's baptism, that his honours were proclaimed; but if he would now declare from *the pinnacle of the temple*, among all the great people who attended the temple service, that he was the Son of God, and then for proof of it, throw himself down unhurt, he would presently be received by every body as a messenger sent from heaven. Thus Satan would have him seek honours of his devising, in contempt of those which God had put on him, and manifest himself in the temple at Jerusalem; whereas God designed he should be more manifest among John's penitents, to whom his doctrine would be more welcome than to the priests. (3.) It is likely he had some hopes, that though he could not throw him down to do him the least mischief, yet if he would but throw himself down, the fall might be his death, and then he should have got him finely out of the way.

2. How he backed and enforced this temptation. He suggested, *It is written*, *ver. 10.* Christ had quoted scripture against him, and he thought he would be quits with him, and would shew that he could quote scripture as well as he. It has been usual with hereticks and seducers to pervert scripture, and to press the sacred writings into the service of the worst of wickednesses. *He shall give his angels charge over thee*, if thou be his Son, and in their hands they shall bear thee up. And now he was upon the pinnacle of the temple, he might especially expect this mini-

stration of angels; for if he were the Son of God, the temple was the proper place for him to be in, *Luke ii. 41.* and if any place under the sun had a guard of angels constantly, it must needs be that, *Psal. lxxviii. 17.* It is true, God has promised the protection of angels to encourage us to trust him, not to tempt him; as far as the promise of God's presence with us, so far the promise of the angel's ministration goes, but no further; they shall keep thee when thou goest on the ground, where thy way lies, but not if thou wilt presume to fly in the air.

3. How he was baffled and defeated in the temptation, *ver. 12.* Christ quoted *Deut. vi. 16.* where it is said, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*, by desiring a sign for the proof of divine revelation, when he has already given that which is sufficient, for so Israel did when they tempted God in the wilderness, saying, *He gave us water out of the rock, but can he give flesh also?* This Christ would be guilty of, if he should say, he did indeed prove me to be the Son of God, by sending the Spirit upon me, which is the *greater*; but can he also give his angels a charge concerning me, which is the *lesser*?

Thirdly, What was the result and issue of this combat, *ver. 13.* Our victorious Redeemer kept his ground, and came off a conqueror, not for himself only, but for us also.

1. The devil emptied his quiver; he ended all the temptation; Christ gave him opportunity to say and do all he could against him, he let him try all his force, and yet defeated him. Did Christ suffer being tempted, till all the temptation was ended; and must not we expect also to pass all our trials, to go through the hour of temptation assigned us?

2. He then quitted the field, he departed from him, he saw it was to no purpose to attack him; he had nothing in him for his fiery darts to fasten upon; he had no blind side, no weak or unguarded part in his wall, and therefore gave up the cause. Note, If we resist the devil, he will flee from us.

3. Yet he continued his malice against him, and departed with a resolution to attack him again; he departed but for a season, *ἀχαι ναίει, till a season*, or, till the season when he was again to be let loose upon him, not as a tempter, to draw him to sin, and so to strike at his head, which was what he now aimed at, and was wholly defeated in it; but as a persecutor, to bring him to suffer, by Judas, and other the wicked instruments whom he employed, and so to bruise his heel, which it was told him, *Gen. iii. 15.* he should have power to do, and would do, though it would be the breaking of his own head. He departed now, till that season came which Christ calls the *power of darkness*. *Luke xxii. 53.* and when the prince of this world would again come, *John xiv. 30.*

14. ¶ And Jesus returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. 15. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. 16. ¶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. 17. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias; and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18. The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down: and the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. 22. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Josephs son? 23. And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thy self: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. 24. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. 25. But I tell you of a truth, Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land: 26. But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. 27. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet: and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. 28. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29. And rose up, and thrust him out of the



the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill (whereon their city was built) that they might cast him down headlong. 30. But he passing through the mids of them, went his way :

After Christ had vanquished the evil spirit, he made it appear how much he was under the influence of the good Spirit ; and having defended himself against the devil's assaults, he now begins to act *offensively*, and to make those attacks upon him by his preaching and miracles, which he could not resist or repel. Observe,

1. What is here said in general of his preaching, and the entertainment it met with in *Galilee*, a remote part of the country, distant from Jerusalem, it was a part of Christ's humiliation that he began his ministry there. But, (1.) Thither he came *in the power of the Spirit* : The same Spirit that qualified him for the exercise of his prophetic office, strongly inclined him to it. He was not to wait for a call from men, for he had light and life in himself. (2.) There he *taught in their synagogues*, their places of public worship, where they met, not as in the temple, for ceremonial services, but for the moral acts of devotion, to read and expound, and apply the word, to pray and praise ; and for church discipline ; these came to be more frequented since the captivity, when the ceremonial worship was near expiring. (3.) This he did so, as that he gained a great reputation, a *fame of him went through all that region*, ver. 14. and it was a good fame ; for, ver. 15. *he was glorified of all* : Every body admired him, and cried him up, they never heard such preaching in all their lives. Now at first he met with no contempt ; or contradiction, all *glorified* him, and there were none as yet that vilified him.

2. Of his preaching at Nazareth, the city where he was brought up, and the entertainment it met with there. And here we are told, how he *preached* there, and how he was *persecuted*.

First, How he preached there. And in that observe, (1.) The opportunity he had for it. *He came to Nazareth*, when he had gained a reputation in other places, in hopes that thereby something, at least, of the contempt and prejudice with which his countrymen would look upon him, might be worn off. There he took occasion to preach, (1.) In the *synagogue*, the proper place ; where it had been *his custom* to attend, when he was a private person, ver. 16. We ought to attend on the public worship of God, as we have opportunity. But now he was entered upon his public ministry, there he preached. Where the multitudes of fish were, there this wise fisherman would cast his net. (2.) On the sabbath-day, the proper time, which the pious Jews spent, not in a meer ceremonial rest from worldly labour, but in the duties of God's worship, as of old they frequented the schools of the prophets, on the *new moons* and the *sabbaths*. Note, It is good to keep sabbaths in solemn assemblies.

(2.) The call he had to it. (1.) He *stood up for to read* ; they had in their synagogues seven readers every sabbath, the first a priest, the second a Levite, and the other five Israelites of that synagogue. We often find Christ *preaching* in other synagogues, but never reading but only in this synagogue at Nazareth, of which he had been many years a member ; now he offered his service, as he had perhaps often done, he read one of the lessons out of the prophets, *Acts* xiii. 15. Note, Reading the scriptures is very proper work to be done in religious assemblies ; and Christ himself did not think it any disparagement to him to be employed in it. (2.) The *book of the prophet Esaias* was *delivered to him*, either by the ruler of the synagogue, or by the minister mentioned, ver. 20. so that he was no intruder, but duly authorized *pro hac vice*. The second lesson for that day being in the prophecy of Esaias, they gave him that volume to read in.

(3.) The text he preached upon. He *stood up to read*, to teach us reverence in *reading* and *hearing* the word of God. When Ezra opened the book of the law, *all the people stood up*, Neh. viii. 5. so did Christ here, when he read in the book of the prophets. Now the book being *delivered to him*, (1.) He *opened* it. The books of the Old Testament were in a manner *shut up*, till Christ opened them, *Isa.* xxix. 11. *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to take the book and open the seals*, for he can open, not the book only, but the understanding. (2.) He *found* the place that was appointed to be read *that day* in course, which he needed not be directed to ; he soon found it, and read it, and took it for his text ; now his text was taken out of *Isa.* lxi. 1, 2. which is here quoted at large, ver. 18, 19. There was a providence in it, that that portion of scripture should be read that day, which speaks so very plainly of the Messiah, that they might be left inexcusable, who *knew him not*, though they heard the *voices of the prophets* read every sabbath-day, which bare witness of him, *Acts* xiii. 27. This text gives a full account of Christ's undertaking, and the work he came into the world to do. Observe,

1. How he was qualified for the work ; *the Spirit of the Lord is upon me* ; all the gifts and graces of the Spirit were conferred

upon him, not by measure, as upon other prophets, but without measure, *John* iii. 34. He now came *in the power of the Spirit* ver. 14.

2. How he was commissioned ; *because he has anointed me, and sent me*. And his extraordinary qualification amounted to a commission ; his being *anointed*, signifies both his being fitted for the undertaking, and called to it. Those whom God *appoints* to any service, he *anoints* for it ; because he hath sent me, he hath sent his Spirit along with me.

3. What his work was ; he was qualified and commissioned.

1. To be a great prophet ; he was *anointed to preach*, that is three times mentioned here, for that was the work he was now entering upon. Observe, (1.) To *whom* he was to *preach* ; to the *poor* ; to those that were *poor in the world*, whom the Jewish doctors disdained to undertake the teaching of, and spoke of with contempt. To those that were *poor in spirit*, to the meek and humble, and to those that are truly sorrowful for sin. To them the gospel and the grace of it will be welcome, and they shall have it, *Matt.* xi. 5. (2.) *What* he was to *preach* ; in general, he must preach *the gospel*. He is sent *εὐαγγελίζασθαι*, to *evangelize* them : not only to preach to them, but to make that preaching effectual ; to bring it not only to their ears, but to their hearts, and deliver them into the mold of it.

Three things he is to preach,

1. *Deliverance to the captives* ; the gospel is a proclamation of liberty, like that to Israel in Egypt, in Babylon. By the merit of Christ, sinners may be loosed from the bonds of guilt, and by his Spirit and grace, from the bondage of corruption. It is a deliverance from the worst of thralldoms, which all those shall have the benefit of, that are willing to make Christ their head, and are willing to be ruled by him.

2. *Recovering of sight to the blind* ; he came not only by the word of his gospel, to bring *light* to them that sat *in the dark* ; but by the power of his grace, to give sight to them that were *blind* ; not only the Gentile world, but every unregenerate soul, that is not only in *bondage*, but in *blindness*, like Samson and Zedekiah. Christ came to tell us that he has *eye-salve* for us, which we may have for the asking, That if our prayer be, *Lord that our eyes may be opened*, his answer shall be, *Receive your sight*.

3. *The acceptable year of the Lord*, ver. 19. He came to let the world know, that the God whom they had offended, was willing to be reconciled to them, and to *accept* of them upon new terms ; that there was yet a way of making their services acceptable to him, that there is now a time of *good will towards men*. It alludes to the year of *release*, or that of *jubilee*, which was an *acceptable year* to servants, that were then set at liberty ; to debtors, against whom all actions then dropped ; and to those who had mortgaged their lands, for then they returned to them again. Christ came to sound the *jubilee* trumpet, and blessed were they that heard *the joyful sound*, *Psal.* lxxxix. 15. it was an acceptable time, for it was a day of salvation.

2. Christ came to be a great *physician*, for he was sent to *heal the broken hearted*, to comfort and cure afflicted consciences, and to give peace to those that were troubled and humbled for sins, and under a dread of God's wrath against them for them ; and to bring them to rest, who were weary and heavy laden, under the burthen of guilt and corruption.

3. To be a great *Redeemer*, he not only proclaims liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did to the Jews in Babylon, *whoever will may go up* ; but he sets at liberty them that are bruised, he doth by his Spirit *incline* and *enable* them to make use of the liberty granted, as then none did, but those *whose spirits God stirred up*, *Ezra* i. 5. He came in God's name to discharge poor sinners, that were debtors and prisoners to divine justice ; the prophets could but *proclaim liberty*, but Christ, as one having authority, as one that had *power on earth to forgive sins*, came to *set at liberty*, and therefore this clause is added here ; and Dr. Lightfoot thinks, that according to a liberty the Jews allowed their readers, to compare scripture with scripture in their reading, for the explication of the text, Christ added it from *Isa.* lviii. 6. where it is made the duty of the acceptable year, to let *the oppressed go free*, where the phrase the LXX. use, is the same with this here.

(4.) Here is Christ's application of this text to himself, ver. 21. When he had read it, he *rolled up the book*, and gave it again to the minister or clerk that attended, and *sat down*, according to the custom of the Jewish teachers ; he *sat daily in the temple teaching*, *Matt.* xxvi. 55. Now he *began* his discourse thus, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*. This which Isaiah wrote by way of prophecy, I have now read to you by way of history. It now began to be fulfilled in Christ's entrance upon his public ministry. Now, in the report they heard of his preaching and miracles in other places ; now, in his preaching to them in their own synagogue. It is most probable Christ went on, and shewed particularly how this scripture was fulfilled, in the doctrine he preached concerning *the kingdom of heaven at hand*, that that was preaching liberty, and sight, and healing, and all the blessings of *the acceptable year of the Lord* ; many other gracious words proceeded out of his mouth, which these were but the *beginning* of for Christ often preached long sermons, which we have but a



short account of. This was enough to introduce a great deal, *This day is this scripture fulfilled.* Note, 1. All the scriptures of the Old Testament, that were to be fulfilled in the Messiah, had their full accomplishment in the Lord Jesus, which abundantly proves that this was *he that should come.* 2. In the providences of God, it is fit to observe the *fulfilling of the scriptures.* The works of God, are not only the accomplishment of his secret word, but of his word revealed; and it will help us to understand both the scriptures, and the providences of God, to compare them one with another.

(5.) Here is the *attention and admiration* of the auditors.

1. Their *attention*, ver. 20. *The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue, and probably there were a great many, were fastened on him,* big with expectation what he would say, having heard so much of late concerning him. Note, It is good in hearing the word, to keep the eye fixed upon the minister, by whom God is speaking to us; for as the eye affects the heart, so usually the heart follows the eye, and is wandering or fixed as that is. Or rather, let us learn hence, to keep the eye fixed upon Christ speaking to us in and by the minister. *What saith my Lord unto his servant?*

2. Their *admiration*, ver. 22. *They all bare him witness, that he spake admirably well, and to the purpose; they all commended him, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth;* and yet, as appears by what follows, they did not believe in him. Note, It is possible, that those who are admirers of good ministers and good preaching, may yet be themselves no true Christians. Observe, (1.) What it was they admired; the *gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.* The words of grace; good words, and spoken in a winning, melting way. Note, Christ's words are words of grace, for grace being poured into his lips, Psal. xlv. 2. words of grace poured from them; and these words of grace are to be wondered at; Christ's name was wonderful, and in nothing was he more so, than in his grace, in the words of his grace, and the power that went along with those words. We may well wonder that he should speak such words of grace to such graceless wretches as we are. (2.) What it was that increased their wonder; and that was, the consideration of his original, *they said, Is not this Joseph's son?* And therefore his extraction mean, and his education mean. Some from this suggestion took occasion perhaps so much the more to admire his *gracious words*, concluding he must needs be taught of God, for they knew no one else had taught him; while others perhaps with this consideration corrected their wonder at his gracious words, and concluded there could be nothing really admirable in them, whatever appeared, because he was the son of Joseph. Can any thing great or worthy our regard, come from one so mean?

(6.) Christ's anticipating an objection, which he knew to be in the minds of many of his hearers. Observe,

1. What the objection was, ver. 23. *Ye will surely say to me, Physician, heal thy self,* i. e. Because ye know that I am the son of Joseph, your neighbour, you will expect that I should work miracles among you, as I have done in other places; as one would expect that a physician, if he be able, should heal not only himself, but those of his own family and fraternity. Most of Christ's miracles were cures, now why should not the sick in thine own city be healed, as well as those in other cities? They were designed to cure people of their unbelief, now why should not the disease of unbelief, if it be indeed a disease, be cured in those of thine own city, as well as in those of others? *Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum,* that has been so much talked of, *do here also in thine own country.* They were pleased with Christ's gracious words, only because they hoped they were but the introduction to some wondrous works of his; they wanted to have their lame, and blind, and sick, and lepers, healed and helped, that the charge of their town might be eased; and that was the chief thing they looked at. They thought their own town as worthy to be the stage of miracles as any others; and why should not he rather draw company to that, than to any other? And why should not his neighbours and acquaintance have the benefit of his preaching and miracles, rather than any other?

2. How he answers this objection against the course he took.

1. By a plain and positive reason why he would not make Nazareth his head-quarters, ver. 24. because it generally holds true, *That no prophet is accepted in his own country,* at least not so well, nor with such probability of doing good, as in some other country; experience seals to this. When prophets have been sent with messages and miracles of mercy, few of their own countrymen, that have known their extraction and education have been fit to receive them. So Dr. Hammond. Familiarity breeds contempt; and we are apt to think meanly of those whose conversation we have been accustomed to; and they will scarce be duly honoured as prophets, who were well known when they were in the rank of private men. That is most esteemed that is far fetched and dear bought, above what is home-bred, though really more excellent. This arises likewise from the envy which neighbours commonly have towards one another, so that they cannot endure to see him their superior, whom a while ago they took to be every way their inferior. For this reason Christ declined working miracles

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or doing any thing extraordinary at Nazareth, because of the rooted prejudices they had against him there.

2. By pertinent examples of two of the most famous prophets of the Old Testament, who chose to dispense their favours among foreigners, rather than among their own countrymen, and that, no doubt, by divine direction.

1. Elijah maintained a widow of Sarepta, a city of Sidon, one that was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, when there was a famine in the land, ver. 25, 26. The story we have 1 King. xvii. 9. It is said here, that the heaven was shut up three years and six months, whereas it is said, 1 King. xviii. 1. that in the third year Elijah shewed himself to Ahab, and there was rain; but that was not the third year of the drought, but the third year of Elijah's sojourning with the widow at Sarepta. As God would hereby shew himself a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, so he would shew, that he was rich in mercy to all, even to the Gentiles.

2. Elisha cleansed Naaman the Syrian of his leprosy, though he was a Syrian, and not only a foreigner, but an enemy to Israel, ver. 27. *Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Eliseus,* four particularly, that brought the news of the Syrians raising the siege of Samaria with precipitation, and leaving the plunder of their tents to enrich Samaria, when Elisha was himself in the besieged city, and this was the accomplishment of his prophecy too, see 2 King. vii. 1, 3, &c. And yet we do not find that Elisha cleansed them, no not for a reward of their service, and the good tidings they brought, but only this Syrian, for none but he had faith to apply himself to the prophet for a cure. Christ himself often met with greater faith among Gentiles than in Israel. And here he mentions both these instances, to shew, that he did not dispense the favour of his miracles by private respects, but according to God's wise appointment. And the people of Israel might as justly have said to Elijah or Elisha, as the Nazarens to Christ, *Physician, heal thy self;* nay, Christ wrought his miracles, though not among his townsmen, yet among Israelites, whereas these great prophets wrought theirs among Gentiles. The examples of the saints, though they will not make a bad action good, yet will help to free a good action from the blame of exceptionable people.

Secondly, How he was persecuted at Nazareth.

1. That which provoked them was, his taking notice of the favour which God by Elijah and Elisha shewed to the Gentiles. *When they heard these things they were filled with wrath,* ver. 28. they were all so; a great change since ver. 22. when they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; thus uncertain are the opinions and affections of the multitude, and so very fickle. If they had mixed faith with those gracious words of Christ, which they wondered at, they would have been awakened by these latter words of his, to take heed of sinning away their opportunities; but those only pleased the ear, and went no further, and therefore these grated on the ear, and irritated their corruptions. They were angry that he should compare himself, whom they knew to be the son of Joseph, with those great prophets, and compare them with the men of that corrupt age, when all had bowed the knee to Baal. But that which especially exasperated them was, that he intimated some kindness God had in reserve for the Gentiles, which the Jews could by no means bear the thoughts of, Acts xxii. 21. Their pious ancestors pleased themselves with the hopes of adding of the Gentiles to the church, witness many of David's psalms, and Isaiah's prophecies; but this degenerate race, when they had forfeited the covenant themselves, hated to think that any others should be taken in.

2. They were provoked to that degree that they made an attempt upon his life. This was a severe trial, now at his setting out, but a specimen of the usage he met with, when he came to his own, and they received him not. (1.) They rose up in a tumultuous manner against him, interrupted him in his discourse, and themselves in their devotions, for they could not stay until their synagogue-worship was over. (2.) They thrust him out of the city, as one not worthy to have a residence among them, though there he had had a settlement so long. They thrust from them the Saviour and the salvation, as if he had been the off-scouring of all things. How justly might he have called for fire from heaven upon them, but this was the day of his patience. (3.) They led him to the brow of the hill, with a purpose to throw him down headlong, as one not fit to live. Though they knew how inoffensively he had for so many years lived among them, how shining his conversation had been, though they had heard such a fame of him, and had but just now themselves admired his gracious words, though in justice he ought to have been allowed a fair hearing and liberty to explain himself, yet they hurried him away in a popular fury or frenzy rather, to put him to death in a most barbarous manner. Sometimes they were ready to stone him for the good works he did, Job. x. 32. here, for not doing the good works they expected from him. To such a height of wickedness was violence sprung up.

3. Yet he escaped, because his hour was not yet come. He passed through the midst of them unhurt; either he blinded their eyes, as the Sodomites and Syrians were, or he bound their hands, or filled them with confusion, so that they could not do what they



they designed; for his work was not done, it was but just begun, his hour was not yet come; when it was come, he freely surrendered himself. They drove him from them, and he went his way. He would have gathered Nazareth, but they would not, and therefore their house is left to them desolate. This added to the reproach of his being Jesus of Nazareth, that not only it was a place whence no good thing was expected, but that it was such a wicked, rude place, and so unkind to him. Yet there was a providence in it, that he should not be much respected by the men of Nazareth, for that would have looked like a collusion between him and his old acquaintance; but now though they received him not, there were those that did.

31. And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath-days. 32. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power. 33. ¶ And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, 34. Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the holy One of God. 35. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the mids, he came out of him, and hurt him not. 36. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this? for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. 37. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about. 38. ¶ And he arose out of the synagogue, and entred into Simons house: and Simons wifes mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. 39. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and ministered unto them. 40. ¶ Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them unto him: and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. 41. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them, suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ. 42. And when it was day, he departed, and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. 43. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. 44. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

When Christ was expelled Nazareth, he came to Capernaum, another city of Galilee; the account we have in these verses, of his preaching and miracles there, we had before, *Mark* i. 21. &c. Observe,

1. His preaching. He taught them on the sabbath-days, ver. 31. In hearing the word preached, as an ordinance of God, we worship God, and it is a proper work for sabbath-days. Christ's preaching much affected people, ver. 32. they were astonished at his doctrine, there was weight in every word he said, and admirable discoveries were made to them by it. The doctrine it self was astonishing, and not only as it came from one that had not had a liberal education; his word was with power: There was a commanding force in it, and a working power went along with it to the consciences of men. The doctrine Paul preached, hereby proved it self to be of God, that it came in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

2. His miracles. Of these we have here,

1. Two particularly instanced in, shewing Christ to be,

1. A controller and conqueror of Satan, in the world of mankind, and in the souls of people, by his power to cast them out of the bodies of those he had taken possession of; for for this purpose was he manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Observe, (1.) The devil is an unclean spirit, his nature directly contrary to that of the pure and holy God, and degenerated from what it was at first. (2.) This unclean spirit works in the children of men; in the souls of many, as then in mens bodies. (3.) It is possible, that those who are very much under the power and working of Satan, may yet be found in the synagogue among the worshippers of God. (4.) Even the devils knew and believe that Jesus Christ is the holy One of God, is sent of God, and is a holy one. (5.) They believe and tremble; this unclean spirit cried out

with a loud voice, under a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and apprehensive that Christ was now come to destroy him. Unclean spirits are subject to continual frights. (6.) The devils have nothing to do with Jesus Christ, nor desire to have any thing to do with him, for he took not on him the nature of angels. (7.) Christ has the devil under check; he rebuked him saying, hold thy peace, and this word he spake with power, *ἐπιωθέντι*, he muzzled; Christ did not only enjoin him silence, but stopped his mouth, and forced him to be silent against his will. (8.) In the breaking of Satan's power, both the enemy that is conquered shews his malice, and Christ the conqueror shews his over ruling-grace. Here, (1.) The devil shewed what he would have done, when he threw the man in the midst, with force and fury, as if he would have dashed him to pieces. But (2.) Christ shewed what a power he had over him, in that he not only forced him to leave him, but to leave him without so much as hurting him, without giving him a parting blow, a parting gripe. Whom Satan cannot destroy, he will do all the hurt he can to; but this is a comfort, he can harm them no farther than Christ permits; nay, he shall not do them any real harm. He came out and hurt him not, i. e. the poor man was perfectly well in an instant, though the devil left him with so much rage, that all that were present thought he had torn him to pieces. (9.) Christ's power over devils was universally acknowledged and adored, ver. 36. No one doubted of the truth of the miracle, it was evident beyond contradiction, nor was any thing suggested to diminish the glory of it, for they were all amazed, saying, What a word is this! They that pretended to cast out devils, did it with abundance of charms and spells, to pacify the devil, and lull him asleep as it were, but Christ commanded them with authority and power, which they could not gainsay or resist. Even the prince of the power of the air is his vassal, and trembles before him. (10.) This, as much as any thing, gained Christ a reputation, and spread his fame. This instance of his power, which many now a days make light of, was then, by them that were eye-witnesses of it, and those no fools neither but men of penetration, magnified, and was looked upon as greatly magnifying him, ver. 37. upon the account of this, the fame of him went out more than ever, into every place of the country round about. Our Lord Jesus when he set out at first in his publick ministry, was mightily talked of, more than afterwards, when peoples admiration wore off with the novelty of the thing.

2. Christ shewed himself to be a healer of diseases; in the former he struck at the root of man's misery, which was Satan's enmity, the origin of all the mischief: In this he strikes at one of the most spreading branches of it, one of the most common calamities of human life, and that is, bodily diseases, which came in with sin, are the most common and sensible corrections for it in this life, and contribute as much as any thing towards the making our few days full of trouble. These our Lord Jesus came to take away the sting of, and as an indication of that intention, when he was on earth, chose to confirm his doctrine by such miracles mostly, as took away the diseases themselves. Of all bodily diseases none more common or fatal to grown people, than fevers, these come suddenly, and suddenly cut off the number of mens months in the midst; are sometimes epidemical; and slay their thousands in a little time. Now here we have Christ's curing of a fever, with a word's speaking; the place was in Simon's house, his patient was Simon's wife's mother; ver. 38, 39. Observe, (1.) Christ is a guest that will pay well for his entertainment; those that bid him welcome into their hearts and houses, shall be no losers by him; he comes with healing. (2.) Even families that Christ visits, yet may be visited with sickness. Houses that are blessed with his distinguishing favours, yet are liable to the common calamities of this life. Simon's wife's mother was ill of a fever; Lord, behold he whom thou lovest, is sick. (3.) Even good people may sometimes be exercised with the sharpest afflictions, more grievous than others; she was taken with a great fever, very acute, and high, and threatening; perhaps it seized her head, and made her delirious. The most gentle fevers may, by degrees, prove dangerous, but this was at first a great fever. (4.) No age can exempt from diseases. It is likely Peter's mother-in-law was in years, and yet in a fever. (5.) When our relations are sick, we ought to apply ourselves to Christ by faith and prayer on their account. They besought him for her; and there is a particular promise, that the prayer of faith shall benefit the sick. (6.) Christ has a tender concern for his people, when they are in sickness and distress; he stood over her, as one concerned for her, and compassionating her case. (7.) Christ had, and still has, a sovereign power over bodily diseases; he rebuked the fever, and with a word's speaking commanded it away, and it left her. He saith to diseases, go, and they go, come, and they come; and can still rebuke fevers, even great fevers. (8.) This proves Christ's cures to be miraculous, that they were done in an instant, immediately she arose. (9.) Where Christ gives a new life, in recovery from sickness, he designs and expects that it should be a new life indeed, spent more than ever in his service, to his glory. If distempers be rebuked, and we arise from a bed of sickness, we must set ourselves to minister to Jesus Christ. (10.) Those that minister to Christ, must be ready to minister to all that are his, for his sake. She ministered to them, not only



to him that had cured her, but to them that had besought him for her. We must study to be grateful to them that have prayed for us.

2. A general account given by wholesale, of many other miracles of the same kind, which Christ did.

1. He cured many that were diseased, even all without exception that made their application to him, ver. 40. it was when the sun was setting, ver. 40. in the evening of that sabbath-day which he had spent in the synagogue. Note, It is good to do a full sabbath-day's work, to abound in the work of the day, in some good work or other, even till sun set; as those that call the sabbath and the business of it, a delight. Observe, He cured all that were sick, poor as well as rich, and though they were sick of divers diseases; so that there was no room to suspect that he had only a specifick for some one disease; he had a remedy for every malady. The sign he used in healing was, laying his hands on the sick; not lifting up his hands for them, for he healed as having authority. He healed by his own power. And thus he would put honour upon that sign which was afterwards used in conferring the Holy Ghost.

2. He cast the devil out of many that were possessed, ver. 41. Confessions were extorted from the demoniacks, they said, *Thou art Christ the Son of God*, but they said it crying with rage and indignation, it was a confession upon the rack, and therefore was not admitted in evidence; Christ rebuked them, and did not suffer them to say, that they knew him to be the Christ, that it might appear beyond all contradiction, that he had obtained a conquest over them, and not a compact with them.

3. Here is his removal from Capernaum, ver. 42, 43.

1. He retired for a while into a place of solitude; it was but a little while that he allowed himself for sleep; not only because a little served him, but because he was content with a little, and never indulged himself in ease; but when it was day, he went into a desert place, not to live constantly like an hermit, but to be sometimes alone with God, as even those should be, and contrive to be, that are most engaged in publick work, or else their work will go on but poorly, and they will find themselves never less alone than when thus alone.

2. He returned again to the places of concourse, and to the work he had to do there. Though a desert place may be a convenient retreat, yet it is not a convenient residence; because we were not sent into this world to live to ourselves, no not to the best part of ourselves only, but to glorify God, and do good in our generation.

1. He was extremely courted to Capernaum again. The people were mighty fond of him, I doubt more because he had healed their sick, than because he had preached repentance to them; they sought him, enquired which way he went, and though it was in a desert place, they came unto him. A desert is no desert, if we be with Christ there; and they stayed him, that he should not depart from them, so that if he would go, it should not be for want of invitation. His old neighbours at Nazareth, had driven him from them, but his new acquaintance at Capernaum were very importunate for his continuance with them. Note, It ought not to discourage the ministers of Christ, that some reject them, for they will meet with others, that will welcome them and their message.

2. He chose rather to diffuse the light of his gospel to many places, than to fix it to one, that no one might pretend to be a mother-church to the rest. Though he was welcome at Capernaum, and had done abundance of good there, yet he is sent to preach the gospel to other cities also; and Capernaum must not insist upon his stay there. They that enjoy the benefit of the gospel, must be willing that others also should share in that benefit, and not covet the monopoly of it. And those ministers who are not driven from one place, may yet be drawn to another, by a prospect of greater usefulness. Christ, though he preached not in vain in the synagogue at Capernaum, yet would not be tied to that, but preached in the synagogues of Galilee, ver. 44. *Bonum est sui diffusivum*. It is well for us, that our Lord Jesus has not tied himself to any one place or people, but wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he will be in the midst of them: and even in Galilee of the Gentiles, his special presence is in the Christian synagogues.

## CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Christ's preaching to the people out of Peter's ship, for want of a better pulpit, ver. 1—3. (2.) The recompence he made to Peter for the loan of his boat, in a miraculous draught of fishes; by which he intimated to him and his partners his design to make them as apostles, fishers of men, ver. 4—11. (3.) His cleansing the leper, ver. 12—15. (4.) A short account of his private devotion, and publick ministry, ver. 16, 17. (5.) His cure of the man sick of the palsy, ver. 18—26. (6.) His calling Levi the publican, and conversing with publicans on that occasion, ver. 27—32. (7.) His justifying his disciples, in not fasting so frequently as the disciples of John and the Pharisees did, ver. 33. ad fin.

1. AND it came to pass, that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesareth, 2. And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. 3. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simons, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land: and he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. 4. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. 5. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. 6. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake. 7. And they beckened unto their partners which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. 8. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. 9. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: 10. And so was also James and John the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. 11. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

This passage of story, fell in order of time, before the two miracles we had in the close of the foregoing chapter, and is the same with that which was more briefly related by Matthew and Mark, of Christ's calling Peter and Andrew to be fishers of men, Matt. iv. 18. and Mark i. 16. They had not related this miraculous draught of fishes at that time, having only in view the calling of his disciples, but Luke gives us that story, as one of the many signs which Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, which had not been written in the foregoing books, John xx. 30, 31. Observe here,

1. What vast crowds attended Christ's preaching; the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, ver. 1. insomuch that no house would contain them, but he was forced to draw them out to the strand, that they might be minded of the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be as the sand upon the sea shore, Gen. xxii. 17. and yet of them but a remnant shall be saved, Rom. ix. 27. The people flocked about him, so the word signifies; they shewed respect to his preaching; though not without some rudeness to his person, which was very excusable for they pressed upon him. Some would reckon this a diminution to him, to be thus cried up by the vulgar, when none of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him; but he reckoned it an honour to him, for their souls were as precious as the souls of the grandees; and it is his aim to bring not so much the mighty as the many sons to God; and it was foretold concerning him, that to him should the gathering of the people be. Christ was a popular preacher, and though he was able at twelve to dispute with the doctors, yet he chose at thirty to preach to the capacity of the vulgar. See how the people relished good preaching, though under all external disadvantages; they pressed to hear the word of God; they could perceive it to be the word of God, by the divine power and evidence that went along with it, and therefore they coveted to hear it.

2. What poor conveniences Christ had for preaching, he stood by the lake of Gennesareth, ver. 1. upon the level with the crowd, so that they could not see him, or hear him; he was lost among them, and every one striving to get near him, he was crowded, and in danger of being crowded into the water: what must he do! It doth not appear that his hearers had any contrivance to give him advantage, but there were two ships or fisher-boats brought to shore, one belonged to Simon and Andrew, the other to Zebedee and his sons, ver. 2. At first Christ saw Peter and Andrew fishing at some distance, so Matthew tells us, chap. iv. 18. but he waited till they came to land, and till the fishermen, that is the servants, were gone out of them, having washed their nets and thrown them by for that time; so Christ entered into that ship that belonged to Simon, and begged of him, that he would lend it him for a pulpit; and though he might have commanded him, yet for love's sake he rather prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land, which would be the worse for his being heard, but Christ would have it so, that he might the better be seen; and it is his being lifted up that draws men to him. Wisdom cries in the top of high places, Prov. viii. 2. it intimates, that Christ had a strong voice, strong indeed, for he made the dead to hear it, and that he did not desire to favour himself. There he sat down and taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord.

3. What



3. What a particular acquaintance Christ hereupon fell into with these fishermen. They had had some conversation with him before, which began at John's baptism, *John* i. 40, 41. they were with him at *Gana of Galilee*, *John* ii. 2. and in Judea, *John* iv. 2. but as yet they were not called to attend him constantly, and therefore here we have them at their calling, and now it was that they were called into a more intimate fellowship with Christ.

1. When Christ had done preaching, he ordered Peter to apply himself to the business of his calling again. *Lanch out into the deep, and let down your nets*, ver. 4. It was not the sabbath-day, and therefore as soon as the lecture was over, he set them to work. Time spent on week-days in the publick exercises of religion, may be but little hindrance to us *in time*, and a great furtherance to us *in temper of mind*, in our worldly business. With what cheerfulness may we go about the duties of our calling, when we have been *in the mount* with God, and from thence fetch a double blessing into our worldly employments, and thus have them sanctified to us, by the word and prayer? It is our wisdom and duty, so to manage our religious exercises, as that they may befriend our worldly business, and so to manage our worldly business, as that it may be no enemy to our religious exercises.

2. Peter having attended upon Christ in his preaching, Christ will accompany him in his fishing; he staid with Christ at the shore, and now Christ will lanch out with him into the deep. Note, Those that will be constant followers of Christ, shall have him a constant guide to them.

3. Christ orders Peter and his ship's crew to cast their net into the sea, which they do in obedience to him, though they had been hard at it all night, and had caught nothing, ver. 4, 5.

We may observe here,

1. How melancholy their business had now been. *Master, we have toiled all the night*, when we should have been asleep in our beds, and have taken nothing, but have had our labour for our pains; one would have thought that should have excused them from hearing the sermon, but such a love had they to the word of God, that it was more refreshing and reviving to them after a wearisome night, than the softest slumbers. But they mention it to Christ, when he bids them go a fishing again. Note, (1.) Some callings are much more toilsome than others are, and more perilous; yet providence has so ordered it for the common good, that there is no useful calling so discouraging, but some or other have a genius for it. Those that follow their business, and get abundance by it, with a great deal of ease, should think with compassion of those who cannot follow theirs, but with a great fatigue, and hardly get a bare livelihood by it. When we have rested all night, let us not forget those who have toiled all night, as Jacob when he kept Laban's sheep. (2.) Be the calling never so laborious, it is good to see people diligent in it, and make the best of it: these fishermen that were thus industrious, Christ singled out for his favourites. They were fit to be preferred as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, that had thus learned to endure hardness. (3.) Even those that are most diligent in their business, yet often meet with disappointments; they that toiled all night yet caught nothing; for the race is not always to the swift. God will have us to be diligent, purely in duty to his command, and dependence upon his goodness, rather than with an assurance of worldly success. We must do our duty, and then leave the event to God. (4.) When we are tired with our worldly business, and crossed in our worldly affairs, we are welcome to come to Christ and spread our case before him, who will take cognizance of it.

2. How ready their obedience was to the command of Christ, *Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net*. 1. Though they had toiled all night, yet if Christ bid them, they will renew their toil, for they know, that they that wait on him shall renew their strength, as work is renewed upon their hands; for every fresh service, they shall have a fresh supply of grace sufficient. 2. Tho' they have taken nothing, yet if Christ bid them let down for a draught, they will hope to take something. Note, We must not presently quit the callings wherewith we are called, because we have not the success in them we promised ourselves. The ministers of the gospel must continue to let down that net, though they have perhaps toiled long and caught nothing; and this is thank-worthy, to continue unwearied in our labours, though we see not the success of them. 3. In this they have an eye to the word of Christ, and a dependence upon that; *at thy word I will let down the net*, because thou dost enjoin it, and thou dost encourage it. We are then likely to speed well, when we follow the conduct of Christ's word.

4. The draught of fish they caught, was so much beyond what was ever known, that it amounted to a miracle, ver. 6. They enclosed a great multitude of fishes, so that their net brake, and yet, which is strange, they did not lose their draught; it was so great a draught, that they not hands enow to draw it up; but they were fain to beckon to their partners, who were at a distance, out of call, to come and help them, ver. 7. But the greatest evidence of the vastness of the draught was, that they filled both the ships with fish, to that degree, that they overloaded them, and they began to sink, so that the fish had like to

have been lost again, with their own weight; as many an overgrown estate raised out of the water, returns to the place from whence it came. Suppose these ships were but five or six tuns a piece; what a vast quantity of fish must there be to load, nay to over-load them both.

Now by this vast draught of fishes, (1.) Christ intended to shew his dominion in the seas as well as on the dry land; over its wealth as over its waves; thus he would shew that he was that Son of man, under whose feet all things were put, and particularly the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas, *Psal.* viii. 8. (2.) He intended hereby to confirm the doctrine he had just now preached out of Peter's ship. We may suppose that the people on the shore who heard the sermon, having a notion that the preacher was a prophet sent of God, carefully attended his motions afterwards, and stayed halting about there, to see what he would do next, and this miracle immediately following, would be a confirmation to their faith, of his being at least a teacher come from God. (3.) He intended hereby to repay Peter for the loan of his boat, for Christ's gospel now, as his ark formerly in the house of Obed-edom, will be sure to make amends, rich amends, for its kind entertainment. None shall shut a door, or kindle a fire in God's house for nought, *Mal.* i. 10. Christ's recompences for services done to his name, are abundant, they are super-abundant. (4.) He intended hereby, to give a specimen, to those who were to be his ambassadors to the world, of the success of their embassy, that though they might for a time, and in one particular place, toil, and catch nothing, yet that they should be instrumental to bring in many to Christ, and enclose many in the gospel net.

5. The impression which this miraculous draught of fishes made upon Peter, was very remarkable.

1. All concerned were astonished, and the more astonished for their being concerned: all the boat's crew were astonished at the draught of fishes which they had taken, ver. 9. they were all surprised; and the more they considered it, and all the circumstances of it, the more they were wonder struck, I had almost said thunder struck at the thought of it, and so were also James and John, which were partners with Simon, ver. 10. and who, for ought appears, were not so well acquainted with Christ before this as Peter and Andrew were. Now they were the more affected with it, (1.) Because they understood it better than others did: they that were well acquainted with this sea, and it is likely had plyed upon it many years, had never seen such a draught of fishes fetched out of it, nor any thing like it, any thing near it, and therefore could not be tempted to diminish it as others might, by suggesting that it was accidental at this time, and what might as well have happened at any time. It greatly corroborates the evidence of Christ's miracles, that those who were best acquainted with them, most admired them. (2.) Because they were most interested in it, and benefited by it. Peter and his part-owners were gainers by this great draught of fishes, it was a rich booty for them, and therefore it transported them, and their joy was a helper to their faith. Note, When Christ's works of wonder are to us in particular works of grace, then especially they command our faith in his doctrine.

2. Peter above all the rest was astonished, to such a degree, that he fell down at Jesus's knees, as he sat in the stern of his boat, and said, as one in an ecstasy, or transport, that knew not where he was, or what he said, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord*, ver. 8. not that he feared the weight of the fish would sink him, because he was a sinful man, but that he thought himself unworthy of the favour of Christ's presence in his boat, and worthy that it should be to him a matter rather of terror than of comfort. This word of Peter's came from the same principle of theirs, that under the Old Testament, so often said they did exceedingly fear and quake at the extraordinary displays of the divine glory and majesty. It was the language of Peter's humility and self-denial, and had not the least tincture of the devil's dialect, *What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?* (1.) His acknowledgement was very just, and what becomes us all to make: *I am a sinful man, O Lord*. Note, Even the best men are sinful men, and should be ready upon all occasions to own it, and especially to own it to Jesus Christ; for to whom else, but to him who came into the world to save sinners, should sinful men apply themselves? (2.) His inference from it was what might have been just, though really it was not so. If I be a sinful man, as indeed I am, I ought to say, come to me, O Lord, or let me come to thee, or I am undone, for ever undone: but considering what reason sinful men have to tremble before the holy Lord God, and to dread his wrath, Peter may well be excused, if in a sense of his own sinfulness and vileness he cry out on a sudden, *Depart from me*. Note, Those whom Christ designs to admit to the intimate acquaintance with him, he first makes sensible that they deserve to be set at the greatest distance from him. We must all own ourselves sinful men, and that therefore Jesus Christ might justly depart from us, but we must therefore fall down at his knees, to pray him that he would not depart; for we unto us if he leaves us, if the Saviour depart from the sinful man.

6. The occasion which Christ took from hence, to intimate to Peter, ver. 10. and soon after to James and John, *Matt.* iv. 21. his purpose to make them his apostles, and instruments of his planting



planting religion in the world: He said unto Simon, who was in the greatest surprize of any of them, at this prodigious draught of fishes, Thou shalt both see and do greater things than these; *fear not*, let not this astonish thee, be not afraid, that after having done thee this honour, it is so great, that I shall never do thee more; No, *from henceforth thou shalt catch men*, by inclosing them in the gospel net, and that shall be a greater instance of the Redeemer's power, and his favour to thee, than this is. That shall be a more *astonishing* miracle, and infinitely more *advantageous* than this. When by Peter's preaching *three thousand souls* were, *in one day*, added to the church, then the type of this great draught of fishes was abundantly answered.

Lastly, The fishermen's farewell to their calling, in order to their constant attendance on Christ, *ver. 11. When they had brought their ships to land*, instead of going to seek for a market for their fish, that they might make the best hand they could of this miracle, they *forsook all and followed him*, being more solicitous to serve the interests of Christ, than to advance any secular interests of their own. It is observable, that they *left all to follow Christ*, when their calling prospered in their hands more than ever it had done, and they had had uncommon success in it. When *riches increase*, and we are therefore most in temptation to *set our hearts* upon them, then to quit them for the service of Christ, this is *thank-worthy*.

12. ¶ And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold, a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 13. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. 14. And he charged him to tell no man: but go and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 15. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. 16. ¶ And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Here is, 1. The cleansing of a leper, *ver. 12—14*. This story we had, both in Matthew and Mark; it is here said to have been in a certain city, *ver. 12*. it was in Capernaum: But the evangelist would not name it, perhaps because it was a reflexion upon the government of the city, that a leper was suffered to be in it. This man is said to be *full of leprosy*, he had that distemper in a high degree, which doth the more fitly represent our natural pollution by sin; we are *full of that leprosy, from the crown of the head, to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness in us*. Now let us learn here,

1. What we must do in the sense of our spiritual leprosy. (1.) We must see Jesus, enquire after him, and acquaint ourselves with him, and reckon the discoveries, made us of Christ by the gospel, the most acceptable and welcome discoveries that could be made us. (2.) We must humble ourselves before him, as this leper, seeing Jesus, *fell on his face*. We must be *ashamed* of our pollution, and in the sense of it blush to lift up our faces before the *holy Jesus*. (3.) We must earnestly desire to be *cleansed* from the defilement, and cured of the disease of sin, which renders us unfit for communion with God. (4.) We must firmly believe Christ's ability and sufficiency to cleanse us; Lord, *Thou canst make me clean*, though I be *full of leprosy*; no doubt is to be made of the merit and grace of Christ. (5.) We must be importunate in prayer for pardoning mercy, and renewing grace, he *fell on his face and besought him*; they that would be cleansed, must reckon it a favour worth wrestling for. (6.) We must refer ourselves to the good will of Christ; Lord, *if thou wilt, thou canst*: This is not so much the language of his diffidence, or distrust of the good-will of Christ, as of his submission, and reference of himself, and his case to the will, to the good-will of Jesus Christ.

2. What we may expect from Christ, if we thus apply ourselves to him. (1.) We shall find him very *condescending*, and forward to take cognizance of our case, *ver. 13. He put forth his hand and touched him*. When Christ visited this leprous world, unasked, unsought unto, he shewed how low he could stoop to do good. His touching the leper was wonderful condescension; but it is much greater to us, when he is himself *touched with the feeling of our infirmities*. (2.) We shall find him very *compassionate*, and ready to relieve us; he said, *I will*, never doubt of that; whosoever comes to me to be healed, *I will in no wise cast out*; he is as willing to cleanse leprous souls, as they can be to be cleansed. (3.) We shall find him all-sufficient, and able to heal and cleanse us, though we be never so full of this loathsome leprosy. One word, one touch from Christ, did the business, *immediately the leprosy departed from him*. If Christ saith, *I will*, be thou *justified*, be thou *sanctified*, it is done; for he has power on earth to *forgive sin*, and power to give the holy Spirit, *1 Cor. vi. 11*.

3. What he requires from those that are cleansed, *ver. 14*. Has Christ sent his word and healed us? (1.) We must be very

*humble*, *ver. 12. He charged him to tell no man*: It should seem, this did not forbid him telling it to the honour of Christ, but he must not tell it to his own honour. Those whom Christ hath healed and cleansed, must know that he hath done it in such a way as doth for ever exclude boasting. (2.) We must be very *thankful*, and make a grateful acknowledgment of the divine grace; *Go, and offer for thy cleansing*. Christ did not require him to give him a fee, but bring the sacrifice of praise to God, so far was he from using his power, to the prejudice of the law of Moses. (3.) We must *keep close to our duty*; go to the priest, and those that attend him. The man whom Christ had made whole, he *found in the temple*, John v. 14. Those that by any affliction have been detained from publick ordinances, when the affliction is removed, should attend on them the more diligently, and adhere to them the more constantly.

2. Christ's *publick serviceableness* to men, and his *private communion* with God; these are put together here, to give lustre to each other.

1. Though never any had so much *pleasure* in his retirements, as Christ had, yet he was *much in a crowd* to do good, *ver. 15*. Though the leper should altogether hold his peace, yet the thing could not be hid, *so much the more went there a fame abroad of him*; the more he sought to conceal himself under a veil of humility, the more notice did people take of him; for honour is like a shadow, which flees from those that pursue it, *for a man to seek his own glory, is not glory*, but it follows those that decline it, and draw from it. The less good men say of themselves, the more will others say of them. But Christ reckoned it a small honour to him, that his *fame went abroad*, it was much more so, that hereby multitudes were brought to receive benefit by him. (1.) By his preaching; they came together to *hear* him, and to receive instructions from him, concerning the kingdom of God. (2.) By his miracles; they came *to be healed by him, of their infirmities*, and that invited them to come hear him, confirmed his doctrine, and recommended it.

2. Though never any did so much *good in publick*, yet he found time for *pious and devout retirements*, *ver. 16. He withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed*, not that he needed to avoid either distraction, or ostentation, but he would set us an example, who need to order the circumstances of our devotion, so as to guard against both. It is likewise our wisdom, so to order our affairs, as that our publick work, and our secret work, may not intrench upon, or interfere with, one another. Note, Secret prayer must be performed secretly; and those that have never so much to do of the best business in this world, must keep up constant stated times for it.

17. And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them. 18. ¶ And behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with the palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. 19. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went upon the house-top, and let him down through the tiling with his couch, into the midst before Jesus. 20. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him; Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. 21. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? 22. But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? 23. Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Rise up and walk? 24. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. 25. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. 26. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.

Here is, 1. A general account of Christ's preaching and miracles, *ver. 17*. (1.) He was *teaching on a certain day*, not on the sabbath-day, then he would have said so, but on a *week-day*; *six days shalt thou labour*, not only for the world, but for thy soul, and the welfare of that. Preaching and hearing the word of God, is *good work*, if it be *done well*, any day in the week, as well as on sabbath-days. It was not in the *synagogue*, but in a *private house*; for even there, where we ordinarily converse with our friends, it is not improper to give and receive good instruction. (2.) There he *taught*, he *healed*, as before, *ver. 15. and*



the power of the Lord was to heal them, *ἡν ἐκ τῶ ἰσχυροῦ αὐτοῦ*; it was mighty to heal them, it was exerted, and put forth, to heal them, to heal them whom he taught; we may understand it so; to heal their souls, to cure them of their spiritual diseases, and to give them a new life, a new nature. Note, Those who receive the word of Christ in faith, will find a divine power going along with that word to heal them; for Christ came with his comforts, to heal the broken hearted, chap. iv. 18. The power of the Lord is present with the word, present to those that pray for it, and submit to it, present to heal them: Or it may be meant (and so it is generally taken) of the healing of those that were diseased in body, who came to him for cures. Whenever there was occasion, Christ was not to seek for his power, it was present to heal. (3.) There were some grandees present in this assembly, and, as it should seem, more than usually, *There were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by*, not sitting at his feet, to learn of him, then I should have been willing to take the following clause, as referring to them, who are spoken of immediately before, the power of the Lord was present to heal them, and why might not the word of Christ reach their hearts? But by what follows, ver. 21. it appears they were not healed, but cavilled at Christ, which forceth us to make that to refer to others, not to them; for they sat by, as persons unconcerned, as if the word of Christ were nothing to them. They sat by as spectators, and censors, and spies, to pick up something on which to ground a reproach, or accusation. How many are there in the midst of our assemblies, where the gospel is preached, that do not sit under the word, but sit by? It is to them as a tale that is told them, not as a message that is sent them; they are willing we should preach before them, not that we should preach to them. These Pharisees and scribes (or doctors of the law) came out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem, they came from all parts of the nation; it is likely they appointed to meet at this time, and place, to see what remarks they could make upon Christ, and what he said and did: They were in a confederacy, as those that said, *Come and let us devise devices against Jeremiah*, and agree to smite him with the tongue, Jer. xviii. 18. Report, and we will report it, Jer. xx. 10. Observe, Christ went on with his work of preaching and healing, though he saw these Pharisees and dons of the Jewish church sitting by, who, he knew, despised him, and watched to ensnare him.

2. A particular account of the cure of the man sick of the palsy, which was related much as it is here, by both the foregoing evangelists; let us therefore only observe in short,

1. The doctrines that are taught us, and confirmed to us by the story of this cure. (1.) That sin is the fountain of all sickness, and the forgiveness of sin is the only foundation, upon which a recovery from sickness can comfortably be built. They presented the sick man to Christ, and he said, *Man, thy sins are forgiven thee*, ver. 20. That is the blessing thou art most to prize and seek; for if thy sins be forgiven thee, though the sickness be continued, it is in mercy; if they be not, though the sickness be removed, it is in wrath. They are the cords of our iniquity, that are the bands of our affliction. (2.) That Jesus Christ has power on earth to forgive sins, and his healing diseases was an uncontested proof of it. This was the thing intended to be proved, ver. 24. That ye may know and believe, that the Son of man, though now upon earth, in his state of humiliation, hath power to forgive sins, and to release sinners, upon gospel terms, from the eternal punishment of sin, he saith to the sick of the palsy, *Arise and walk*, and he is cured immediately. Christ claims one of the prerogatives of the King of kings, when he undertakes to forgive sin, and it is justly expected he should produce a good proof of it: Well, saith he, I will put it upon this issue, here is a man struck with a palsy, and for his sin, if I do not, with a word's speaking, cure his disease in an instant, which cannot be done by nature or art, but purely by the immediate power and efficacy of the God of nature, then say I am not entitled to the prerogative of forgiving sin, am not the Messiah, am not the Son of God, and King of Israel: But if I do, you must own I have power to forgive sins: Thus was it put upon a fair trial, and one word of Christ determined it. He did but say, *Arise, take up thy couch*, and that chronic disease had an instantaneous cure, immediately he arose before them; they must all own there could be no cheat or fallacy in it; they that brought him, could attest how perfectly lame he was before; they that saw him could attest how perfectly well he was now; insomuch that he had strength enough to take up, and carry away, the bed he lay upon. How well is it for us, that this most comfortable doctrine of the gospel, That Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour, has power to forgive sin, has such a full attestation. (3.) That Jesus Christ is God. He appears to be so, (1.) By knowing the thoughts of the scribes and Pharisees, ver. 22. which it is God's prerogative to do; though those scribes and Pharisees knew as well how to conceal their thoughts, and keep their countenances, as most men, and probably were industrious to do it at this time, for they lay in wait secretly. (2.) By doing that, which their thoughts owned none could do but God only, ver. 21. *Who can forgive sins*, say they, *but only God*? I will prove, saith Christ, that I can forgive sins; and what follows then, but that *he is God*? What horrid wickedness then were they guilty of, who charged him with speaking

the worst of blasphemies, then when he spoke the best of blessings, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*!

2. The duties that are taught us, and recommended to us by this story. (1.) In our application to Christ, we must be very pressing and urgent; that is an evidence of faith, and is very pleasing to Christ, and prevailing with him. They that were the friends of this sick man, sought means to bring him in before Christ, ver. 18. and when they were baffled in their endeavour, yet did not give up the cause; but when they could not get in by the door, it was so crowded, they untiled the house, and let the poor patient down through the roof, into the midst before Jesus, ver. 19. In this Jesus Christ saw their faith, ver. 20. Now here he has taught us (and it were well if we could learn the lesson) to put the best construction upon words and actions, that they will bear. When the centurion, and the woman of Canaan, were in no care at all, to bring the patients they interceded for into Christ's presence, but believed that he could cure them at a distance, he commended their faith: But though in these there seemed to be a different notion of the thing, and an apprehension that it was requisite the patient should be brought into his presence, yet he did not censure and condemn their weakness, did not ask them, what need you give this disturbance to the assembly? Are you under such a degree of infidelity, as to think I could not have cured him, tho' he had been out of doors? But he made the best of it, and even in this he saw their faith. It is a comfort to us that we serve a Master that is willing to make the best of us. (2.) When we are sick, we should be more in care to get our sins pardoned, than to get our sickness removed. Christ, in what he said to this man, taught us when we seek to God for health, to begin with seeking to him for pardon. (3.) The mercies which we have the comfort of, God must have the praise of. The man departed to his own house, glorifying God, ver. 25. To him belong the escapes from death, and in them therefore he must be glorified. (4.) The miracles which Christ wrought were amazing to them that saw them, and we ought to glorify God in them, ver. 26. They said, *We have seen strange things to day*, such as we never saw before, nor our fathers before us, they are altogether new. But they glorified God, who had sent into their country such a benefactor to it; and were filled with fear, with a reverence of God, with a jealousy that this was the Messiah, and that he was not treated by their nation, as he ought to be, which might prove in the end the ruin of their state; perhaps they were some such thoughts as these, that filled them with fear, and a concern likewise for themselves.

27. ¶ And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. 28. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. 29. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans, and of others that sat down with them. 30. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? 31. And Jesus answering, said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician: but they that are sick. 32. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. 33. ¶ And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink? 34. And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? 35. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. 36. ¶ And he spake also a parable unto them, No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old: if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new, agreeth not with the old. 37. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. 38. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. 39. No man also having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

All this, except the last verse, we had before in Matthew and Mark; it is not the story of any miracle in nature wrought by our Lord Jesus, but it is an account of some of the wonders of his grace, which to those who understand things aright, are no less cogent proofs of Christ's being sent of God, than the other.

1. It was a wonder of his grace, that he would call a publican from the receipt of custom to be his disciple and follower, ver. 27. It was wonderful condescension that he would admit poor fishermen



men to that honour, men of the *lowest rank*; but much more wonderful that he would admit *publicans*, men of the *worst reputation*, men of *ill fame*; in this Christ *humbled himself*, and appeared in the *likeness of sinful flesh*; by this he *exposed himself*, and got the invidious character of a *friend of publicans and sinners*.

2. It was a *wonder of grace*, that that call was made *effectual*, became immediately so, *ver. 28*. This publican, though those of that employment commonly had little inclination to religion, yet for his religion's sake he left a good place in the custom-house, which probably was his livelihood, and where he stood fair for better preferment, and *rose up and followed Christ*. There is no heart too hard for the Spirit and grace of Christ to work upon, nor any difficulties in the way of a sinner's conversion insuperable to his power.

3. It was a *wonder of his grace*, that he would not only admit a converted publican into his family, but would keep company with unconverted publicans, that he might have an opportunity of doing their souls good; and justified himself in it, as agreeing with the great design of his coming into the world. Here is a wonder of grace indeed, that Christ undertakes to be the physician of souls *distempered* by sin, and ready to *die* of the distemper, *ver. 31*. He is a healer by office: that he has a particular regard to the sick, to sinners as his patients, convinced, awakened sinners, that see their need of the physician: That he came to call *sinners*, the worst of sinners, to repentance, and to assure them of pardon upon repentance, *ver. 32*. This is glad tidings of great joy indeed.

4. It was a *wonder of his grace*, that he did so patiently bear the *contradiction of sinners against himself* and his disciples, *ver. 30*. He did not express his resentments of the cavils of the scribes and Pharisees, as he justly might have done, but answered them with reason and meekness; and instead of taking that occasion to shew his displeasure against the Pharisees, as afterwards he did, or of recriminating upon them, he took that occasion to shew his compassion to poor publicans, another sort of sinners, and to encourage them.

5. It was a *wonder of his grace*, that in the discipline which he trained his disciples up under, he *considered their frame*, and proportioned their services to their strength and standing, and to the circumstances they were in. It was objected, as a blemish upon his conduct, that he did not make *his disciples to fast* so often as those of the *Pharisees*, and John Baptist did, *ver. 33*. He insisted most upon that which is the *soul* of fasting, the mortification of sin, the crucifying of the flesh, and living a life of self-denial, which is as much better than fasting and corporal penances, as *mercy* is, than *sacrifice*.

6. It was a *wonder of his grace*, that Christ reserved the trials of his disciples for their latter times, when by his grace, they were in some good measure better prepared, and fitted for them, than they were at first. Now they were as the *children of the bride-chamber*, when the *bridegroom* is *with them*, when they have plenty, and joy, and every day is a festival; Christ was welcomed wherever he came, and they for his sake, and as yet they met with little or no opposition: But this will not last always, *the days will come*, when the *bridegroom* shall be *taken away from them*, *ver. 35*. When Christ shall leave them with their hearts full of sorrow, their hands full of work, and the world full of enmity and rage against them, *then shall they fast*, shall not be so well fed as they are now, *We both hunger and thirst, and are naked*, 1 Cor. iv. 11. Then they shall keep many more *religious fasts* than they do now, for providence will call them to it, they will then serve the Lord *with fastings*, Acts xiii. 2.

7. It was a *wonder of his grace*, that he proportioned their exercises to their strength. He would not put *new cloth into an old garment*, *ver. 36*. nor *new wine into old bottles*, *ver. 37, 38*. would not, as soon as ever he had called them out of the world, put them upon the strictnesses and austerities of discipleship, lest they should be tempted to *fly off*: When God brought Israel out of Egypt, he would not bring them *by the way of the Philistines*, lest they should *repent* when they *saw war*, and *return into Egypt*, Exod. xiii. 17. So Christ would train up his followers gradually to the discipline of his family; for no man having *drank old wine*, will of a sudden, straightway *desire new*, or relish it, but will say *the old is better*, because he has been *used to it*, *ver. 39*. The disciples will be tempted to think their old way of living better, till they are by degrees trained up to this way whereunto they are called: Or, turn it the other way; let them be *accustomed* a while to religious exercises, and then they will *abound* in them as much as you do, but we must not be too hasty with them. Calvin takes it as an admonition to the Pharisees not to boast of their fasting, and the noise and shew they made with it, nor to despise his disciples because they did not in like manner *signalize* themselves; for the profession the Pharisees made, was indeed *pompous and gay*, like *new wine* that is brisk and sparkling, whereas all wise men say *the old is better*; which, though it doth not give its colour so well in the cup, yet is more warming in the stomach, and more wholesome. Christ's disciples, though they had not so much of the *form of godliness*, yet they had more of the *power of it*.

## C H A P. VI.

In this chapter we have Christ's exposition of the moral law, which he came not to destroy, but to fulfil, and to fill up by his gospel.

(1.) Here is a proof of the lawfulness of works of necessity and mercy on the sabbath-day; the former in vindication of his disciples plucking the ears of corn; the latter in vindication of himself healing the withered hand on that day, *ver. 1—11*. (2.) His retirement for secret prayer, *ver. 12*. (3.) His calling his twelve apostles, *ver. 13—16*. (4.) His curing the multitudes of those under various diseases, who made their application to him, *ver. 17—19*. (5.) The sermon that he preached to his disciples and the multitude, instructing them in their duty both to God and man, *ver. 20—49*.

1. **A**ND it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn-fields: and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. 2. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath-days? 3. And Jesus answering them, said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him: 4. How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shew-bread, and gave also to them that were with him, which is not lawful to eat, but for the priests alone? 5. And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. 6. And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. 7. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day: that they might find an accusation against him. 8. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose, and stood forth. 9. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing, Is it lawful on the sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? 10. And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 11. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

These two passages of story we had both in Matthew and Mark, and they were there laid together, *Matt. xii. 1. Mark ii. 23—iii. 1*. because, though happening at some distance of time from each other, yet both were designed to rectify the mistakes of the scribes and Pharisees concerning the sabbath-day, on the *bodily rest* of which, they laid greater stress, and required greater strictness than the law-giver intended. Here,

1. Christ justifies his disciples in a *work of necessity* for themselves on that day, and that was *plucking the ears of corn*, when they were hungry on that day. This story here has a date, which we had not in the other evangelists, it was *on the second sabbath after the first*, *ver. 1*. that is, as Dr. Whitby thinks, pretty clear, the *first sabbath after the second day of unleavened bread*, from which day they reckoned the *seven weeks*, to the feast of pentecost; the first of which they called *Σάββατον δευτεροπρώτον*, the second *δευτεροδευτερον*, and so on. Blessed be God we need not be critical in this matter: Whether this circumstance be mentioned, to intimate that this sabbath was thought to have some peculiar honour upon it, which aggravated the offence of the disciples; or only to intimate, that being the first sabbath after the offering of the first fruits, it was the time of the year when corn was near ripe, is not material. We may observe,

(1.) Christ's disciples ought not to be nice and curious in their diet, not at any time, especially not on sabbath-days, but take up with what is easiest got, and be thankful. These disciples *plucked the ears of corn, and did eat*, *ver. 1*. a little served them, and that which had no delicacy in it.

(2.) Many that are themselves guilty of the greatest crimes, are forward to censure others for the most innocent and inoffensive actions, *ver. 2*. The Pharisees quarrelled with them as doing that which it was *not lawful to do on the sabbath-days*, when it was their own practice to feed deliciously on sabbath-days, more than on all other days.

(3.) Jesus



(3.) Jesus Christ will justify his disciples when they are unjustly censured, and will own and accept of them in many a thing, which men tell them *it is not lawful for them to do*: How well is it for us that men are not to be our judges, and that Christ will be our advocate!

(4.) Ceremonial appointments may be dispensed with in cases of necessity; as the appropriating of the shew-bread to the priests, was dispensed with, when David was by providence brought into such a strait, that he must either have that, or none, *ver. 3, 4*. And if God's own appointments might be thus set aside for a greater good, much more may the traditions of men.

(5.) Works of necessity are particularly allowable on the sabbath-day; but we must take heed that we turn not this liberty into licentiousness, and abuse God's favourable concessions and condescensions, to the prejudice of the work of the day.

(6.) Jesus Christ, though he allowed works of necessity on the sabbath-day, yet will have us to know, and remember, that it is his day, and therefore is to be spent in his service, and to his honour, *ver. 5*. *The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath*, i. e. In the kingdom of the Redeemer, the sabbath-day is to be turned into a *Lord's day*; the property of it is, in some respects, to be altered, and it is to be observed chiefly in honour of the Redeemer, as it had been before in honour of the Creator, (*Jer. xvi. 14, 15*.) and in token of this, it shall not only have a new name, the *Lord's day*, (yet not forgetting the old, for it is a sabbath of rest still) but shall be transferred to a new day, the first day of the week.

2. He justifies himself in doing *works of mercy* for others, on the sabbath-day. Observe in this,

1. That Christ on the sabbath-day *entered into the synagogue*. Note, It is our duty, as we have opportunity, to sanctify sabbaths in religious assemblies: On the sabbath there ought to be a *holy convocation*; and that our place must not be empty without very good reason.

2. In the synagogue on the sabbath-day *he taught*. Giving and receiving instruction from Christ is very proper work for a sabbath-day, and for a *synagogue*. Christ took all opportunities to teach not only his disciples, but the multitude.

3. That Christ's patient was one of the hearers: There was *a man whose right hand was withered*, he came to learn from Christ, whether he had any expectation to be healed by him, doth not appear: But those that would be *cured* by the grace of Christ, must be willing to *learn* the doctrine of Christ.

4. That among those that were the hearers of Christ's excellent doctrine, and the eye-witnesses of his glorious miracles, there were some who came with no other design but to pick quarrels with him, *ver. 7*. The scribes and Pharisees would not, as became *generous* adversaries, give him fair warning, that if he did *heal* on the sabbath-day, they would construe it a violation of the fourth commandment, which they ought in honour and justice to have done, because it was a case *without precedent*, none having ever cured as he did, and therefore could not be an *adjudged* case; but basely *watched* him, as the lion doth his prey, whether he would *heal* on the sabbath-day, that they might *find an accusation against him*, and surprize him with a prosecution.

5. That Jesus Christ was neither *ashamed*, nor *afraid* to own the purposes of his grace, in the face of those who he knew confronted them, *ver. 8*. *He knew their thoughts*, and what they designed, and he bid the man *rise and stand forth*, hereby to try the patient's faith and boldness.

6. He appealed to his adversaries themselves, and to the convictions of natural conscience, whether it was the design of the fourth commandment to restrain men from doing good on the sabbath-day, that good which their hand finds to do, which they have an opportunity for, and which cannot so well be put off to another time, *ver. 9*. *Is it lawful to do good, or evil, on the sabbath-days?* No wicked men are such *absurd* and *unreasonable* men, as *persecutors* are who study to *do evil* to men for *doing good*.

7. He healed the poor man, and restored him to the present use of his right hand with a word's speaking, though he knew his enemies would not only take offence at it, but take advantage against him for it, *ver. 10*. Let not us be drawn off either from our duty or usefulness, by the oppression we meet with in it.

8. His adversaries were hereby enraged so much the more against him, *ver. 11*. instead of being convinced by this miracle, as they ought to have been, that he was a teacher come from God; instead of being brought to be in love with him, as a benefactor to mankind, they were *filled with madness*, vexed that they could not frighten him from doing good, nor hinder the growth of his interest in the affections of the people. They were *mad* at Christ, *mad* at the people, *mad* at themselves: Anger is a *short madness*, malice is a *long one*; *impotent* malice, especially, *disappointed* malice, such was theirs. When they could not prevent his working this miracle, they *communed one with another what they might do to Jesus*, what other way they might take to run him down. We may well stand amazed at it, that the sons of men should be so wicked as to do thus, and that the Son of God should be so patient as to suffer it.

12. And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13. ¶ And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom he also named apostles: 14. Simon (whom he also named Peter) and Andrew his brother James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, 15. Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, 16. And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. 17. ¶ And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; 18. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. 19. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out him, and healed them all.

In these verses we have our Lord Jesus in *secret*, in *his family*, and in *publick*, and in all three acting like himself.

1. In *secret* we have him *praying to God*, *ver. 12*. This evangelist takes frequent notice of Christ's retirements, to give us an example of secret prayer, by which we must keep up our communion with God daily, and without which it is impossible the soul should prosper. *In those days*, when his enemies were filled with madness against him, and were contriving what to do to him, he went out to *pray*; that he might answer the type of David, *Psal. civ. 4*. *For my love they are my adversaries, but I give my self unto prayer*. Observe, (1.) He was *alone* with God; he went out into a mountain to pray, where he might have no disturbance or interruption given him; we are never less alone, than when we are thus alone. Whether there was any convenient place built upon this mountain, for devout people to retire to for their private devotions, as some think, and that that *oratory*, or *place of prayer*, is meant here by *ἡ πρεσβευχή τῆς οἴης*, to me seems very uncertain: He went into a mountain for privacy, and therefore probably would not go to a place frequented by others. (2.) He was *long* alone with God; *he continued all night in prayer*. We think one half hour a great deal to spend in the duties of the closet, but Christ continued a *whole night* in meditation and secret prayer. We have a great deal of *business* at the throne of grace, and we should take a great *delight* in communion with God, and by both those may be kept sometimes long at prayer.

2. In his *family* we have him nominating his immediate attendants, that should be the constant auditors of his doctrine, and eye-witnesses of his miracles, that hereafter they might be sent forth as *apostles*, his *messengers* to the world, to preach his gospel to it, and plant his church in it, *ver. 13*. After he had *continued all night in prayer*, one would have thought that *when it was day* he should have reposed himself, and got some sleep: No, as soon as any body was stirring, he *called unto him his disciples*. In serving God, our great care should be not to *lose time*, but to make the end of one good duty the beginning of another. Ministers are to be ordained with *prayer*, more than ordinarily *solemn*. The number of the apostles was *twelve*; their names are here recorded, and it is the *third time* we have met with them, and in each of the *three* places, the *order* of them differs; to teach both ministers and Christians not to be nice in precedency, not in *giving* it, much less in *taking* it, but look upon it as a thing not worth taking notice of, let it be as it lights. He that in Mark was called Thaddeus, in Matthew, Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus, is here called *Judas the brother of James*, the same that wrote the epistle of Jude. Simon that in Matthew and Mark, was called the Canaanite, is here called Simon Zelotes, perhaps for his great zeal in religion. Concerning these twelve here named, we have reason to say, as the queen of Sheba did of Solomon's servants, *Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants that stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom*; never were men so privileged, and yet one of them had a devil, and proved a traitor, *ver. 16*. yet Christ, when he chose him, was not deceived in him.

3. In *publick* we have him *preaching* and *healing*, the two great works between which he divided his time, *ver. 17*. He came down with the twelve from the mountain, and *stood in the plain*, ready to receive those that resorted to him; and there were presently gathered about him, not only the *company of his disciples*, who used to attend him, but also a great *multitude of people*, a mixt multitude out of all *Judea and Jerusalem*, though it was some scores of miles from Jerusalem to that part of Galilee where Christ now was; though at Jerusalem they had abundance of famous rabbins that had great names, and bore a mighty sway, yet they came to hear Christ. They came also from the *sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon*, though they who lived there were generally men of business, and though they bordered upon Canaanites, yet here were some well-affected to Christ, such there were dispersed in all parts, here and there one.



1. They came to hear him, and he preached to them. Those that have not good preaching near them, had better travel far for it than be without it. It is worth while to go a great way to hear the word of Christ, and to go out of the way of other business for it.

2. They came to be cured by him, and he healed them; some were troubled in body, and some in mind; some had diseases, some had devils, but both the one and the other upon their application to Christ were healed, for he has power over diseases and devils, ver. 17, 18. over the effects, and over the causes. Nay, it should seem, those that had no particular diseases to complain of, yet found it a great confirmation and renovation to their bodily health and vigour, to partake of the virtue that went out of him; for, ver. 19. the whole multitude sought to touch him, those that were in health as well as those that were sick, and they were all one way or other the better for him, he healed them all; and who is there that doth not need upon some account or other to be healed? Note, There is a fulness of grace in Christ, and healing virtue in him, and ready to go out from him, that is enough for all, enough for each.

20. ¶ And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. 21. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. 22. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. 23. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. 24. But woe unto you that are rich: for ye have received your consolation. 25. Woe unto you that are full: for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now: for ye shall mourn and weep. 26. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you: for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Here begins a practical discourse of Christ, which is continued to the end of the chapter, most of which is found in the sermon upon the mount, Matt. v. and vii. Some think this was preached at some other time and place, and there are other instances of Christ's preaching the same things, or to the same purpose at different times: but it is probable, that this is only the evangelist's abridgment of that sermon, and perhaps that in Matthew too is but an abridgment; the beginning and the conclusion is much the same; and the story of the cure of the centurion's servant follows presently upon it, both there and here, but it is not material.

In these verses we have,

1. Blessings pronounced upon suffering saints, as happy people, though the world pities them, ver. 20. He lifted up his eyes upon his disciples, not only the twelve, but the whole company of them, ver. 17. and directed his discourse to them; for when he had healed the sick in the plain, he went up again to the mountain to preach; there he sat, as one having authority, and thither they came to him, Matt. v. 1. and to them he directed his discourse, to them he applied it, and taught them to apply it to themselves. When he had laid it down for a truth, *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, he added *Blessed are ye poor*. All believers that take the precepts of the gospel to themselves, and live by them, may take the promises of the gospel to themselves, and live upon them. And the application, as it is here, seems especially designed to encourage the disciples, with reference to the hardships and difficulties they were likely to meet with in following Christ.

1. You are poor, you have left all to follow me, are content to live upon alms with me, are never to expect any worldly preferment in my service; you must work hard, and fare hard as poor people do; but you are blessed in your poverty, it shall be no prejudice at all to your happiness; nay, you are blessed for it, all your losses shall be abundantly made up to you, for yours is the kingdom of God; all the comforts and graces of his kingdom here, and all the glories and joys of his kingdom hereafter; yours it shall be, nay, yours it is. Christ's poor are rich in faith, Jam. ii. 5.

2. You hunger now, ver. 21. you are not fed to the full as others are, many times rise hungry, your commons are so short; or are so intent upon your work, that you have not time to eat bread, are glad of a few ears of corn for a meal's meat; thus you hunger now in this world, but in the other world you shall be filled, shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more.

3. You weep now, are often in tears, tears of repentance, tears of sympathy, you are of them that mourn in Zion. But blessed are ye, your present sorrows are no prejudices to, but preparatories for your future joy, ye shall laugh. You have triumphs in reserve, you are but sowing in tears, and shall shortly reap in joy, Psal. cxxvi. 5, 6. They that now sorrow after a godly sort, are treasuring up comforts for themselves, or rather, God is treasuring up comforts for them; and the day is coming when  
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their mouth shall be filled with laughing, and their lips with rejoicing, Job viii. 21.

4. You now undergo the world's ill will; you must expect all the base treatment that a spiteful world can give you, for Christ's sake, because you serve him and his interests, you must expect that wicked men will hate you, because your doctrine and life convicts and condemns them; and those that have church power in their hands will separate you, will force you to separate yourselves, and then excommunicate you for so doing, and lay you under the most ignominious censures, will pronounce anathemas against you, as scandalous and incorrigible offenders; and will do this with all possible gravity and solemnity, and the pomp and pageantry of appeals to heaven, to make the world believe, and almost you yourselves too, that it is ratified in heaven; thus will they endeavour to make you odious to others, and a terror to yourselves. This is supposed to be the proper notion of ἀπορίσσειν ὑμᾶς, they shall cast you out of their synagogues. And they that have not this power, will not fail to shew their malice to the utmost of their power, for they shall reproach you, shall charge you with the blackest crimes, which you are perfectly innocent of, shall fasten upon you the blackest characters which you do not deserve; they shall cast out your name as evil, your name as Christians, as apostles, they shall do all they can to render these names odious. This is the application of the eighth beatitude, Matt. v. 10, 11, 12.

Such usage as this seems hard, but blessed are ye when ye are so used; it is so far from depriving you of your happiness, that it will greatly add to it; it is an honour to you, as it is to a brave hero to be employed in the wars, in the service of his prince, and therefore rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy, ver. 23. Do not only bear it, but triumph in it: For, 1. You are hereby highly dignified in the kingdom of grace, for you are treated as the prophets were before you, and therefore not only need not be ashamed of it, but may justly rejoice in it, for it will be an evidence for you that you walk in the same spirit, and in the same steps, are engaged in the same cause, and employed in the same service with them. 2. You will for this be abundantly recompensed in the kingdom of glory, not only your services for Christ, but your sufferings will come into the account; your reward is great in heaven. Venture upon your sufferings, in a full belief that the glory of heaven will abundantly countervail all these hardships; so that though you may be losers for Christ, you shall not be losers by him in the end.

2. Woes denounced against prospering sinners as miserable people, though the world envies them. These we had not in Matthew. It should seem the best exposition of these woes, compared with the foregoing blessings, is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; Lazarus had the blessedness of those that are poor, and hunger, and weep now, for in Abraham's bosom all the promises made to them who did so, were made good to him; but the rich man had the woes that follow here, as he had the character of those on whom those woes are entailed.

1. Here is a wo to them that are rich, that is, that trust in riches, that have abundance of this world's wealth, and instead of serving God with it, serve their lusts with it; wo to them, for they have received their consolation, that which they placed their happiness in, and were willing to take up with for a portion, ver. 24. They in their life-time received their good things, which in their account were the best things, and all the good things they are ever likely to receive from God. You that are rich are in temptation to set your hearts upon a smiling world, and to say, Soul, take thine ease in the embraces of it, This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; and then wo unto you. (1.) It is the folly of carnal worldlings that they make the things of this world their consolation, which were only intended for their convenience; they please themselves with them, pride themselves in them, and make them their heaven upon earth; and to them the consolations of God are small, and of no account. (2.) It is their misery that they are put off with them, as their consolation; let them know it to their terror, when they are parted from these things, there is an end of all their comfort, a final end of it, and nothing remains to them but everlasting misery and torment.

2. Here is a wo to them that are full, ver. 25. that are fed to the full, and have more than heart could wish, Psal. lxxiii. 7. that have their bellies filled with the hid treasures of this world, Psal. xvii. 14. that when they have abundance of these are full, and think they have enough, they need no more, they desire no more, Rev. iii. 17. Now ye are full, now ye are rich, 1 Cor. iv. 8. they are full of themselves without God and Christ, wo to such for they shall hunger; they shall shortly be stripped and emptied of all those things they are so proud of; and when they shall have left behind them in the world all those things which are their fulness, they shall carry away with them such appetites and desires, as the world they remove to will afford them no gratifications of; for all the delights of sense, which they are now so full of, will in hell be denied, and in heaven superseded.

3. Here is a wo to them that laugh now, that have always a disposition to be merry, and always something to make merry with; that know no other joy but that which is carnal and sensual, and know no other use of this world's good, but purely to indulge  
that



that carnal sensual joy ; that banish sorrow, even godly sorrow, from their minds, and are always entertaining themselves with the laughter of the fool ; *wo unto such*, for it is but *now*, for a little time that they *laugh*, they shall *mourn and weep* shortly, shall *mourn and weep* eternally, in a world where there is nothing but *weeping and wailing*, endless, easeless, and remediless sorrow.

4. Here is a *wo* to them *whom all men speak well of*, i. e. that make it their great and only care to gain the praise and applause of men, that value themselves by that, more than by the favour of God and his acceptance, *ver. 26. Wo unto you*, i. e. it would be a bad sign that you were not faithful to your trust, and to the souls of men, if you preached so as that no body would be disgusted ; for your business is to tell people of their faults, and if you do that as you ought, you will get that *ill will* which never *speaks well*. The false prophets indeed that flattered your fathers in their wicked ways, that *prophefied smooth things* to them, were caressed and spoken well of, and if you be in like manner cried up, you will be justly suspected to deal deceitfully as they did. We should desire to have the approbation of those that are wise and good, and not be indifferent what people say of us ; but as we should despise the reproaches, so we should also despise the praises of the fools in Israel.

27. ¶ But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you : 28. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. 29. And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek, offer also the other : and him that taketh away thy cloke, forbid not to take thy coat also. 30. Give to every man that asketh of thee ; and of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again. 31. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. 32. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye ? for sinners also love those that love them. 33. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye ? for sinners also do even the same. 34. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye ? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again : and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest : for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil. 36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

These verses agree pretty much with *Matt. v. 38.* to the end of that chapter ; *I say unto you which hear*, *ver. 27.* to all you that hear, and not to disciples only, for these are lessons of universal concern. *He that has an ear let him hear.* Those that diligently hearken to Christ, shall find he has something to say to them well worth their hearing. Now the lessons Christ here teacheth us are,

1. That we must render to all their due, and be honest and just in all our dealings, *ver. 31. As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise*, for this is *loving our neighbour as ourselves* ; what we would expect in reason to be done to us, either in justice or charity by others, if they were in our condition, and we in theirs, that, as the matter stands, we must do to them. We must *put our souls into their souls stead*, and then pity and succour them, as we would desire, and justly expect to be ourselves pitied and succoured.

2. That we must be free in giving to them that need, *ver. 30. Give to every man that asketh of thee*, to every one that is a proper object of charity, that wants necessities, which thou hast wherewithal to supply out of thy superfluities. Give to those that are not able to help themselves, to those that have not relations in a capacity to help them. Christ would have his disciples ready to distribute, and willing to communicate to their power in ordinary cases, and beyond their power in extraordinary.

3. That we must be generous in forgiving those that have been any way injurious to us.

1. We must not be extreme in demanding our right, when it is denied us. *Him that taketh away thy cloke*, either forcibly or fraudulently, *forbid him not* by any violent means to take thy coat also, *ver. 29.* Let him have that too, rather than fight for it. And, *ver. 30. of him that taketh thy goods*, so Dr. Hammond thinks it should be read, that borrows them, or that takes them up from thee upon trust, of such do not exact them ; if providence have made such insolvent, do not take the advantage of the law against them, but rather lose it, than take them by the throat, *Matt. xviii. 28.* If a man run away in thy debt, and take away thy goods with him, do not perplex thyself, nor be incensed against him.

2. We must not be rigorous in revenging a wrong when it is done us ; *unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek*, instead of bringing an action against him, or sending for a writ for him, or bringing him before a justice, *offer also the other* ; i. e. pass it by,

though thereby thou shouldest be in danger of bringing upon thyself another like indignity ; which is commonly pretended in excuse of taking the advantage of the law in such a case. If any one *smite thee on the cheek*, rather than give another blow to him, be ready to receive another from him ; that is, leave it to God to plead thy cause, and do thou sit down silent under the affront ; and when we do thus, God will *smite our enemies*, as far as they are his, *upon the cheek bone*, so as to break the teeth of the ungodly, *Psal. iii. 7.* for he hath said, *Vengeance is mine*, and he will make it appear that it is so, when we leave it to him to take vengeance.

3. Nay, we must *do good to them that do evil to us*. This is that which our Saviour in these verses chiefly designs to teach us, as a law peculiar to his religion, and a branch of the perfection of it.

1. We must be kind to those from whom we have received injuries. We must not only love our enemies, and bear a good will to them, but we must do good to them, be as ready to do any good office to them as to any other person, if their case call for it, and it be in the power of our hands to do it. We must study to make it appear by positive acts, if there be an opportunity for them, that we bear them no malice, nor seek revenge. Do they curse us, speak ill of us, and wish ill to us ? do they despitefully use us in word or deed ? Do they endeavour to make us contemptible or odious ? Let us bless them, and pray for them, speak well of them, the best we can, wish well to them, especially to their souls, and be intercessors with God for them. This is repeated, *ver. 35. Love ye your enemies, and do them good.* To recommend this difficult duty to us, it is represented as a generous thing, and an attainment few arrive to. *To love those that love us*, has nothing uncommon in it, nothing peculiar to Christ's disciples, for sinners will love those that love them, there is nothing self-denying in that, it is but following nature, even in its corrupt state, and puts no force at all upon it, *ver. 32.* it is no thanks to us, to love those that say and do just as we would have them. And, *ver. 33. if ye do good to them which do good to you*, and return their kindnesses, it is from a common principle of custom, honour, and gratitude, and therefore *what thank have ye ?* What credit are ye to the name of Christ, or what reputation do you bring to it ? for sinners also, that know nothing of Christ and his doctrine, do even the same. But it becomes you to do something more excellent and eminent, herein to out-do your neighbours, to do that which sinners will not do, and which no principle of theirs can pretend to reach to, you must render good for evil ; not that any thanks is due to us, but then we are to our God for a name and a praise. And he will have the thanks.

2. We must be kind to those from whom we expect no manner of advantage, *ver. 35. lend, hoping for nothing again.* It is meant of the rich lending to the poor a little money for their necessity, to buy daily bread for themselves and their families, or to keep them out of prison ; in such a case we must lend, with a resolution not to demand interest for what we lend, as we have most justly from those that borrow money to make purchases withal, or to trade with ; but that is not all, we must lend, though we have reason to suspect, that what we lend we lose. Lend to those that are so poor, that it is not probable they will be able to pay us again. This precept will be best illustrated by that law of Moses, *Deut. xv. 7, 8, 9, 10.* which obliges them to lend to a poor brother as much as he needed, though the year of release was at hand.

Here are two motives to this generous charity.

1. It will redound to our profit, for our reward shall be great, *ver. 35.* what is given, or laid out, or lent and lost on earth, from a true principle of charity, it will be made up to us in the other world, unspeakably to our advantage. You shall not only be repaid, but rewarded, greatly rewarded ; it will be said to you, *Come ye blessed, inherit the kingdom.*

2. It will redound to our honour, for herein we shall resemble God in his goodness, which is his greatest glory. *Ye shall be the children of the Highest* ; shall be owned by him as his children, being like him. It is the glory of God, that he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil ; bestows the gifts of common providence even upon the worst of men, who are every day provoking him and rebelling against him, and using those very gifts to his dishonour. Hence he infers, *ver. 36. Be merciful as your Father is merciful* ; this explains, *Matt. v. 48. Be perfect as your Father is perfect.* Imitate your Father, in those things that are his brightest perfections. Those that are merciful as God is merciful, even to the evil and the unthankful, are perfect as God is perfect ; so he is pleased graciously to accept it, though infinitely falling short. Charity is called the bond of perfectness, *Col. iii. 14.* And this should strangely engage us to be merciful to our brethren, even such as have been injurious to us ; not only that God is so to others, but that he is so to us, though we have been, and are evil and unthankful ; it is of his mercies that we are not consumed.

37. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged : condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned : forgive, and ye shall be forgiven : 38. Give, and it shall be given unto you ;



you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again. 39. And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? 40. The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. 41. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brothers eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 42. Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thy self beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brothers eye. 43. For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit: neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 44. For every tree is known by his own fruit: for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes. 45. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good: and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. 46. ¶ And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? 47. Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doth them, I will shew you to whom he is like. 48. He like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. 49. But he that heareth and doth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth, against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.

All these sayings of Christ we had before in Matthew, some of them *chap. 7.* others in other places. They were sayings Christ often used, they needed only to be mentioned, it was easy to apply them. Grotius thinks we need not be critical here in seeking for the coherence: they are golden sentences, like Solomon's proverbs, or parables. Let us observe here,

1. That we ought to be very *candid* in our censures of others, because we need grains of allowance our selves: therefore *judge not others*, because then you your selves *shall not be judged*; therefore *condemn not others*, because then you your selves *shall not be condemned*, ver. 37. Exercise towards others that charity which *thinketh no evil*, which *bears all things*, *believes and hopes all things*, and then others will exercise that charity towards you. God will not *judge and condemn* you, men will not. They that are merciful to other peoples names, shall find others merciful to theirs.

2. That if we are of a *giving*, and a *forgiving* spirit, we shall our selves reap the benefit of it; *forgive, and ye shall be forgiven*. They that forgive others injuries, others will forgive them their inadvertences. They that forgive others trespasses against them, God will forgive them their trespasses against him. And he will be no less mindful of the *liberal*, that *devise liberal things*, ver. 38. *Give, and it shall be given to you*. God in his providence will recompense it to you; it is *lent* to him, and *he is not unrighteous* to forget it, *Heb. vi. 10.* but he will *pay it again*. Men shall return it into your bosom; for God makes use of men many times as instruments, not only of his *avenging*, but of his *rewarding* justice. If we in a right manner give to others when they need, God will incline the hearts of others to give to us when we need, and to give liberally, *good measure, pressed down and shaken together*. They that *sow plentifully* shall *reap plentifully*. Whom God recompenseth he *abundantly* recompenseth.

3. That we must expect to be dealt with our selves, as we deal with others. *With the same measure that ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*. Those that deal *hardly* with others, must acknowledge as Adonibezek did, *Judg. i. 7.* that God is righteous, if others deal hardly with them; and they may expect to be paid in their own coin; but they that deal *kindly* with others, have reason to hope that when they have occasion, God will raise them up friends that will deal kindly with them. Though providence doth not always go by this rule, because the full and exact retributions are reserved for another world, yet ordinarily it observes a proportion sufficient to deter us from all acts of rigour, and to encourage us in all acts of beneficence.

4. That those who put themselves under the conduct of the ignorant and erroneous, are likely to perish with them, ver. 39. *Can the blind lead the blind?* Can the Pharisees that are blinded with pride, and prejudice, and bigotry, *lead the blind* people into the right way, *shall not both fall together into the ditch?* How can they expect any other? Those that are led by the common opinion, course, and custom of this world, are themselves blind; and are led by the blind, and will perish with the world that *sits in darkness*. They that ignorantly, and at a venture, *follow the multitude to do evil*, follow the blind in the broad way that leads the many to *destruction*.

5. That Christ's followers cannot expect better treatment in the world than their Master had, ver. 40. Let them not promise themselves more honour, or pleasure in the world than Christ had, nor aim at that worldly pomp and grandeur which he never was ambitious of, but always declined; nor affect that power in secular things which he would not assume: but every one that would shew himself *perfect*, an established disciple, let him be *as his Master*, dead to the world, and every thing in it as his Master is; let him live a life of labour and self-denial, as his Master doth, and make himself a servant of all; let him stoop, and let him toil, and do all the good he can, and then he will be a complete disciple.

6. That those who take upon them to rebuke and reform others, are concerned to look to it that they be themselves blameless and harmless, and without rebuke, ver. 41, 42. (1.) Those with a very ill grace censure the faults of others, who are not aware of their own faults. It is very absurd for any to pretend to be so quick sighted, as to spy small faults in others, like a mote in the eye, when they are themselves so perfectly past feeling, as not to perceive a *beam in their own eye*. (2.) Those are altogether unfit to help to reform others, whose reforming charity doth not begin at home. How canst thou offer thy service to thy brother to *pull out the mote from his eye*, which requires a good eye as well as a good hand, when thou thy self hast a *beam in thine own eye*, and makest no complaint of it? (3.) Those therefore that would be serviceable to the souls of others, must first make it appear that they are solicitous about their own souls. To help to pull the mote out of our brother's eye is a good work, but then we must qualify our selves for it by beginning with our selves; and our reforming our own lives, may, by the influence of example, contribute to others reforming theirs.

7. That we may expect mens words and actions will be according as they are; according as their hearts are, and according as their principles are.

1. The heart is the *tree*, and the words and actions are fruit according to the nature of the tree, ver. 43, 44. If a man be really a *good man*, if he has a principle of grace in his heart, and the prevailing bent and bias of the soul be towards God and heaven, though perhaps he may not abound in fruit, though some of his fruits be blasted, and though he may be sometimes like a tree in winter, yet he doth not *bring forth corrupt fruit*, though he may not do you all the good he should, yet he will not in any material instance do you hurt. If he cannot reform ill manners, he will not *corrupt good manners*. If the fruit man brings forth be *corrupt*, if a man's devotion tends to debauch the mind and conversation, if a man's conversation be vicious, if he be a drunkard or fornicator, if he be a swearer or liar, if he be in any instance unjust, or unnatural, his *fruit is corrupt*, and you may be sure he is not a *good tree*. On the other hand, a *corrupt tree doth not bring forth good fruit*, though he may bring forth green leaves, *for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble do they gather grapes*. You may if you please stick figs upon thorns, and hang a bunch of grapes upon a bramble, but they neither are, nor can be the natural product of the trees, so neither can you expect any *good carriage* from those that have justly an *ill character*. If the fruit be good, you may conclude the tree is so; if the conversation be holy and heavenly, and regular, though you cannot infallibly know the heart, yet you may charitably hope that that is upright with God, for *every tree is known by its own fruit*: But the *vile person will speak villainy*, Isa. xxxii. 6. and the experience of the moderns herein agrees with the *proverb of the ancients*, that *wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13.

2. The heart is the *treasure*, and the words and actions are the expences or produce from that treasure, ver. 45. This we had, *Matt. xii. 34, 35.* The reigning love of God and Christ in the heart, denominates a man a *good man*, and it is a *good treasure in the heart*, it enricheth a man, it furnisheth him with a good stock to spend upon, for the benefit of others; out of such a *good treasure* a man may bring forth that which is good; but where the love of the world and the flesh reign, there is an *evil treasure in the heart*, out of which an *evil man* is continually bringing forth *that which is evil*, and by what is brought forth, you may know what is in the heart; as you may know what is in the vessel, water or wine, by what is *drawn out from it*; Joh. ii. 8. *Of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*; what the mouth doth ordinarily speak, doth speak with relish and delight, generally agrees with what is innermost and uppermost in the heart; *he*



that speaks of the earth, is earthly, Joh. iii. 31. not but that a good man may possibly drop an ill word, and a wicked man make use of a good word to serve an ill turn: but, for the most part, the heart is as the words are, *vain or serious*; it therefore concerns us to get our hearts filled, not only with *good*, but with *abundance* of it.

8. That it is not enough to *hear* the sayings of Christ, but we must *do* them; not enough to profess relation to him, as his servants, but we must make conscience of obeying him.

1. It is putting an *affront upon him*, to call him *Lord, Lord*, as if we were wholly at his command, and had devoted our selves to his service, if we do not make conscience of conforming to his will, and serving the interests of his kingdom. We do but mock Christ, as they that in scorn said, *Hail King of the Jews*, if we call him never so often, *Lord, Lord*, and yet walk in the way of our own hearts, and in the sight of our own eyes. Why do we call him *Lord, Lord*, in prayer, (compare *Matt. vii. 21, 22.*) if we do not obey his commands: He that *turns away his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination.*

2. It is *putting a cheat upon ourselves*, if we think that a bare profession of religion will save us, that *hearing* the sayings of Christ will bring us to heaven without *doing* them. This he illustrates by a similitude, *ver. 47, 48, 49.* which shews,

1. That those only make sure work for their souls and eternity, and take the course that will stand them in stead in a trying time, who do not only *come* to Christ as his scholars, and *hear his sayings*, but *do* them; who think and speak and act in every thing, according to the established rules of his holy religion. They are like a *house built on a rock*; these are they that *take pains* in religion, as they do that *build on a rock*; that *begin low*, as they do that *dig deep*; that found their hope upon Christ who is the rock of ages, and other foundation can no man lay; these are they who *provide for hereafter*, who get ready for the worst, who lay up in store a good foundation for the *time to come*, for the *eternity to come*, 1 Tim. vi. 19. They that do thus, do well for themselves; for (1.) They shall keep their integrity in times of temptation and persecution; when others fall from their own steadfastness, as the seed on the stony ground, they shall *stand fast in the Lord*. (2.) They shall keep their comfort, and peace, and hope, and joy, in the midst of the greatest distresses. The *storms* and *streams* of affliction shall not shock them, for their feet are *set upon a rock, a rock higher than they*. (3.) Their everlasting welfare is secured. In death and judgment they are safe. Obedient believers are *kept by the power of Christ, through faith, unto salvation*, and shall never perish.

2. That those who rest in a bare hearing of the sayings of Christ, and do not live up to them, are but preparing for a fatal disappointment. *He that heareth and doth not*, that knows his duty, but lives in the neglect of it; he is like a man that *built a house without a foundation*. He pleaseth himself with hopes that he has no ground for, and his hopes will fail him, when he most needs the *comfort* of them, and when he expects the *crowning* of them, when the *stream beats vehemently* upon his house, it is gone, the sand it is built upon is washed away, and *immediately it falls*. Such is the *hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul*; it is as the spider's web, and the giving up of the ghost.

## C H A P. VII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Christ confirming the doctrine he had preached in the former chapter, with two glorious miracles, the curing of one at a distance, and that was the centurion's servant, *ver. 1—10.* and the raising of one to life that was dead, the widow's son at Naim, *ver. 11—18.* (2.) Christ confirming the faith of John, who was now in prison, and of some of his disciples, by sending him a short account of the miracles he wrought, in answer to a question he received from him, *ver. 19—23.* To which he adds, an honourable testimony concerning John, and a just reproof to the men of that generation, for the contempt they put upon him and his doctrine, *ver. 24—35.* (3.) Christ comforting a poor penitent, that applied herself to him, all in tears of godly sorrow for sin, assuring her, that her sins were pardoned; and justifying himself in the favour he shewed her, against the cavils of a proud Pharisee, *ver. 36—50.*

1. **N**OW when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. 2. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. 3. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. 4. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this. 5. For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. 6. Then Jesus

went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thy self, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof. 7. Wherefore neither thought I my self worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word and my servant shall be healed. 8. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. 9. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 10. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

Some difference there is between this story of the cure of the centurion's servant, as it is related here, and as we had it, *Matt. viii. 5, &c.* for there it was said, that the centurion came to Christ, here it is said, that he sent to him, first some of the elders of the Jews, *ver. 3.* and afterwards some other friends, *ver. 6.* But it is a rule, that *we* are said to *do that*, which *we do by another*; *Quod facimus per alium, id ipsum facere judicamur.* The centurion might be said to do that which he did by his proxies; as a man takes possession by his attorney. But it is probable the centurion himself came at last, when Christ said to him, *Matt. viii. 13. as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.*

This miracle is here said to have been wrought by our Lord Jesus, *when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people*, *ver. 1.* What Christ said, he said *publickly*; whoever would might come and hear him; *in secret have I said nothing*, *Joh. xviii. 20.* Now to give an undeniable proof of the authority of his preaching word, he here gives an uncontestable proof of the power and efficacy of his healing word. He that had such a commanding empire in the kingdom of nature, as that he could command away diseases, no doubt has such a sovereignty in the kingdom of grace, as to enjoin duties displeasing to flesh and blood, and bind under the highest penalties to the observance of them. This miracle was wrought in Capernaum, where most of Christ's mighty works were done, *Matt. xi. 23.*

Now observe,

1. That the centurion's servant that was sick, was *dear to his master*, *ver. 2.* It was the praise of the servant, that by his diligence and faithfulness, and a manifest concern for his master and for his interest, as for himself and for his own, he recommended himself to his master's esteem and love. Servants should study to *endear* themselves to their masters. It was likewise the praise of the master, that when he had a good servant, he knew how to value him. Many masters that are haughty and imperious, think it favour enough to the best servants they have, not to rate them, and beat them, and be cruel to them, whereas they ought to be kind to them, and tender of them, and solicitous for their welfare and comfort.

2. That the master *when he heard of Jesus*, was for making application to him, *ver. 3.* Masters ought to take particular care of their servants when they are *sick*; and not to neglect them then. This centurion begged that *Christ would come and heal his servant*; we may now by faithful and fervent prayer apply ourselves to Christ in heaven, and ought to do so when sickness is in our families; for Christ is still the great physician.

3. That he sent some of the elders of the Jews to Christ, to represent the case and solicit for him, thinking that a greater piece of respect to Christ, than if he had come himself, because he was an uncircumcised Gentile, whom he thought Christ, being a prophet, would not care for conversing with. For that reason he sent Jews, whom he acknowledged to be favourites of heaven, and not ordinary Jews neither, but *elders of the Jews*, persons in authority, that the dignity of the messengers might give honour to him to whom they were sent; Balak sent princes to Balaam.

4. That the elders of the Jews were hearty intercessors for the centurion, *they besought him instantly*, *ver. 4.* were very urgent with him, pleading for the centurion, that which he would never have pleaded for himself, *That he was worthy for whom he should do this.* If any Gentile was qualified to receive such a favour, sure he was. The centurion said, *I am not so much as worthy of a visit*, *Matt. viii. 8.* but the elders of the Jews thought him worthy of the cure; thus *honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.* Let another man praise thee, and not thy own mouth. But that which they insisted upon in particular, was, that though he was a Gentile, yet he was a hearty well-wisher to the Jewish nation and religion, *ver. 5.* they thought there needed as much with Christ, as there did with them, to remove the prejudices against him as a Gentile, and a Roman, and an officer of the army, and therefore mention this; (1.) That he was well affected to the people of the Jews; *he loveth our nation*, which few of the Gentiles did. Probably he had read the Old Testament; from whence it was easy to advance a very high esteem of the Jewish nation,



nation, as favoured by heaven above all people. Note, Even conquerors, and those *in power*, ought to keep up an affection for the conquered; and those they have *power over*. (2.) That he was well affected to their worship; he *built them a new synagogue* at Capernaum, finding that what they had, was either gone to decay, or not large enough to contain the people; and that the inhabitants were not of ability, to build one for themselves. Hereby he testified his veneration for the God of Israel, and his belief of his being the one only living and true God, and his desire, like that of Darius, to have an interest in the prayers of God's Israel, *Ezra vi. 10.* This centurion built a synagogue at his own proper costs and charges, and probably employed his soldiers that were in garrison there, in the building, to keep them from idleness. Note, Building places of meeting for religious worship, is a very *good work*, is an instance of love to God and his people, and those who do good works of that kind, are *worthy of double honour*.

5. That Jesus Christ was very ready to shew kindness to the centurion. He presently *went with them*, ver. 6. though he was a Gentile; for *is he the Saviour of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also*, Rom. iii. 29. The centurion did not think himself worthy to visit Christ, ver. 7. Yet Christ thought him worthy to be visited by him; for those that *humble themselves, shall be exalted*.

6. That the centurion, when he heard that Christ was doing him the honour to come to his house, gave further proofs both of his humility and of his faith. Thus the graces of the saints are quickened by Christ's approaches towards them. *When he was now not far from the house*, and the centurion had notice of it, instead of setting his house in order for his reception, he *sends friends* to meet him with fresh expressions, (1.) Of his *humility*; Lord, *trouble not thy self*, for I am unworthy of such an honour, because I am a Gentile; this speaks not only his low thoughts of himself, notwithstanding the greatness of his figure, but his high thoughts of Christ, notwithstanding the meanness of his figure in the world. He knew how to honour a prophet of God, though he was despised and rejected of men. (2.) Of his *faith*, Lord, *trouble not thy self*, for I know it doth not need, thou canst cure my servant without coming *under my roof*, by that almighty power from which *no thought can be withholden*. Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed; so far was this centurion from Naaman's fancy, that he should come to him, and stand and strike his hand over the patient, and so recover him, 2 King. v. 11. He illustrates this faith of his, by a comparison taken from his own profession, and is confident Christ can as easily command away the distemper, as he can command any of his soldiers; can as easily send an angel, with commission to cure this servant of his, as he can send a soldier on an errand, ver. 8. Christ hath a sovereign power over all the creatures, and all their actions, and can change the course of nature as he pleaseth, can rectify its disorders, and repair its decays in human bodies, for *all power is given to him*.

7. That our Lord Jesus was wonderfully well pleased with the faith of the centurion, and the more surprized at it, because he was a Gentile; and the centurion's faith having thus honoured Christ, see how he honoured it, ver. 9. he *turned him about*, as one amazed, and *said to the people that followed him*, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. Note, Christ will have those that follow him, to observe and take notice of the great examples of faith, that are sometimes set before them, especially when any such are found among those that do not follow Christ so closely, as they do in profession; that we may be shamed by the strength of their faith, out of the weaknesses and waverings of ours.

8. That the cure was *presently and perfectly* wrought, ver. 10. They that were sent knew they had their errand, and therefore went back, and found the servant well, and under no remains at all of his distemper. Christ will take cognizance of the distressed case of poor servants, and be ready to relieve them, for there is *no respect of persons with him*. Nor are the Gentiles excluded from the benefit of his grace; nay, this was a specimen of that much greater faith, which would be found among the Gentiles, when the gospel would be published, than among the Jews.

11. ¶ And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. 12. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. 13. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. 14. And he came and touched the bier, (and they that bare him stood still) and he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. 15. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak: and he delivered him to his mother. 16. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet

is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. 17. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about. 18. And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things.

We have here the story of Christ's raising to life a widow's son at Naim; that was dead, and in the carrying out to be buried; which Matthew and Mark had made no mention of; only in the general, Matthew had recorded it in Christ's answer to the disciples of John, that *the dead were raised up*, Matt. xi. 5.

Observe, 1. Where and when this miracle was wrought. It was the *next day after* he had cured the centurion's servant, ver. 11. Christ was doing good *every day*, and never had cause to complain that he had *lost a day*. It was done at the gate of a small city or town, called Naim; not far from Capernaum. Probably the same with a city called Nais, which Jerom speaks of.

2. Who were the witnesses of it; it is as well attested as can be, for it was done in the sight of two crowds, that met in or near the gate of the city. There was a crowd of *disciples* and other *people* attending Christ, ver. 11. and a crowd of relations and neighbours attending the funeral of the young man, ver. 12. Thus there were a sufficient number to attest the truth of this miracle, for it was a greater proof of Christ's divine authority, than his healing of diseases, for by no power of nature, or any means, can the dead be raised.

3. How it was wrought by our Lord Jesus.

1. The person raised to life was a *young man*, cut off by death in the beginning of his days; a common case; *Man comes forth like a flower, and is cut down*. That he was really dead, was universally agreed; there could be no collusion in the case, for Christ was *entering into the town*, and had not seen him, till now that he met him upon the bier. He was *carried out* of the city, for the Jews burying-places were without their cities, and at some distance from them. This young man was the *only son* of his mother, and *she a widow*. She depended upon him to be the staff of her old age, but he proves a broken reed, every man at his best estate is so. How numerous, how various, how very calamitous are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world? What a vale of tears is it? What a Bochim, a place of weepers? We may well think how deep the *sorrow* of this poor mother was, for *her only son*; that is used to express the greatest grief, Zech. xii. 10. and the deeper, in that she was a *widow*; broken with breach upon breach, and a *full end made of her comforts*. *Much people of the city was with her*, by condoling her loss, to comfort her.

2. Christ shewed both his *pity* and his *power* in raising him to life, that he might give a specimen of both, which shine so bright in man's redemption.

1. See how *tender* his *compassions* are towards the afflicted, ver. 13. *When the Lord saw* the poor widow following her son to the grave, *he had compassion on her*. Here was no application made to him for her, not so much as that he would speak some words of comfort to her, but *ex mero motu*, purely from the goodness of his nature, he was troubled for her. The case was piteous, and he looked upon it with pity. His eye affected his heart; and he *said unto her, weep not*. Note, Christ has a concern for the mourners, for the miserable, and often *prevents them with the blessings of his goodness*. He undertook the work of our redemption and salvation, in his *love and in his pity*, Isa. lxiii. 9. What a pleasing idea doth this give us of the compassions of the Lord Jesus, and the multitude of his *tender mercies*, which may be very comfortable to us, when at any time we are in sorrow? Let poor widows comfort themselves in their sorrows with this, that Christ *pities them*, and knows their souls and adversity; and if others despise their grief, he does not. Christ said, *weep not*; and he could give her a reason for it, which no one else could; weep not for a *dead son*, for he shall presently become a *living one*. This was a reason peculiar to her case; yet there is a reason common to all that sleep in Jesus, which is of equal force against inordinate and excessive grief for their death, that they shall rise again, shall rise in glory, and therefore we must not sorrow, as those that have no hope, 1 Thes. iv. 13. Let Rachel that *weeps for her children, refrain her eyes from tears*, for there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that *thy children shall come again to their own border*, Jer. xxxi. 17. And let our *passion* at such a time be checked and calmed by the consideration of Christ's compassion.

2. See how *triumphant* his *commands* are, over even death itself, ver. 14. *He came and touched the bier*, or coffin, in or upon which the dead body lay; for to him it would be no pollution; hereby he intimated to the bearers, that they should not proceed; he had something to say to the dead young man; *Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom*, Job xxxii. 24. Hereupon, *they that bare him stood still*, and probably let down the bier from their shoulders to the ground, and opened the coffin, if it were closed up; and then, with solemnity, as one that had authority, and to whom belonged the issues from death, he said, *Young man, I say unto thee, arise*. The young man was *dead*, and could not arise by any power of his own, no more



can those that are spiritually dead, in trespasses and sins; yet it was no absurdity at all for Christ to bid him *arise*, when a power went along with that word to *put life* into him. The gospel call to all people, to young people particularly, is *arise*, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light and life. Christ's dominion over death, was evidenced by the immediate effect of his word, *ver. 15. He that was dead sat up* without any help. When Christ put life into him, he made it to appear by his *sitting up*. Have we grace from Christ; let us shew it. Another evidence of life was, that he *began to speak*; for whenever Christ gives us spiritual life, he *opens the lips*, in prayer and praise. And lastly, he would not oblige this young man, to whom he had given a new life, to go along with him, either as his disciple to minister to him, though he owed him even his own self; much less as a trophy, or shew to get honour by him, but *delivered him to his mother*, to attend her, as became a dutiful son; for Christ's miracles were miracles of mercy; and a great act of mercy this was to this widow; now she was *comforted*, according to the time in which she had been afflicted; and much more; for she could now look upon this son, as a particular favourite of heaven, with more pleasure than if he had not died.

4. What influence it had upon the people, *ver. 16. There came a fear on all*; it frightened them all to see a dead man start up alive out of his coffin in the open street, at the command of a man; they were all struck with wonder at this miracle, and *glorified God*. The Lord and his goodness, as well as the Lord and his greatness, are to be feared. The inference they drew from it was, that *a great prophet is risen up among us*, the great prophet that we have been long looking for, doubtless he is one divinely inspired, who can thus breathe life into the dead; and that in him *God had visited his people* to redeem them, as was expected, *Luke i. 68. This would be life from the dead* indeed, to all them that waited for the consolation of Israel. When dead souls are thus raised to spiritual life by a divine power going along with the gospel, we must glorify God, and look upon it as a gracious visit to his people. The report of this miracle was carried, (1.) In general, all the country over, *ver. 17. This rumour of him*, that he was the great prophet, *went forth* upon the wings of fame *through all Judea*, which lay a great way off, and throughout all Galilee, which was the *region round about*. Most got this notion of him, yet few believed in him, and gave up themselves to him. Many have the *rumour* of Christ's gospel in their ears, that have not the *savour and relish* of it in their souls. (2.) In particular it was carefully brought to John Baptist, who was now in prison, *ver. 18. His disciples came* and gave him an account of all things, that he might know, that though he was bound, yet *the word of the Lord was not bound*; God's work was going on though he was laid aside.

19. ¶ And John calling unto him two of his disciples, sent *them* unto Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? 20. When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? 21. And in that same hour he cured many of *their infirmities*, and plagues, and of evil spirits, and unto many that were blind he gave sight. 22. Then Jesus answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. 23. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me. 24. ¶ And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? 25. But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings courts. 26. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. 27. This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 28. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: But he that is least in the kingdom of God, is greater than he. 29. And all the people that heard him, and the publicans justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. 30. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. 31. ¶ And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? 32. They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced: we

have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept. 33. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread, nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. 34. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. 35. But wisdom is justified of all her children.

All this discourse concerning John Baptist, occasioned by his sending to ask whether he was the Messiah or no, we had, much as it is here related, *Matt. xi. 2—19.*

First, We have here the message John Baptist sent to Christ, and the return he made to it. Observe,

1. The great thing we are to enquire concerning, is, whether he be he that should come to redeem and save sinners, or whether we are to look for another, *ver. 19, 20.* We are sure God has promised that a Saviour shall come, an anointed Saviour; we are as sure, that what he has promised he will perform in its season: If this Jesus be that promised Messiah, we will receive him, and will look for no other; but if not, we will continue our expectations, and, though he tarry, will wait for him.

2. The faith of John Baptist himself, or at least of his disciples, wanted to be *confirmed* in this matter; for Christ had not yet publicly declared himself to be indeed the Christ, nay, he would not have his disciples, who knew him to be so, to speak of it, till the proofs of his being so were compleated in his resurrection. The great men of the Jewish church had not owned him, nor had he gained any interest that was like to set him upon the throne of his father David. Nothing of that power and grandeur was to be seen about him, in which it was expected the Messiah would appear. And therefore it is not strange that they should ask, *Art thou the Messiah?* not doubting but that if he were not, he would direct them what *other* to look for.

3. Christ left it to his own works to praise him in the gates, to tell what he was, and to prove it. While John's messengers were with him he wrought many miraculous cures, *in that same hour*; which perhaps intimates, that they staid but *an hour* with him; and what a deal of good work did Christ do in a little time, *ver. 21. He cured many of their infirmities, and plagues in body, and of evil spirits* that affected the mind, either with frenzy or melancholy; and *unto many that were blind, he gave sight*. He multiplied the cures, that there might be no ground left to suspect a fraud. And then, *ver. 22. he bid them go tell John what they had seen*. And he and they might easily argue, as even the common people did, *John vii. 31. When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these, which this man has done?* These cures which they saw him work, were not only confirmations of his commission, but explications of it. The Messiah must come to cure a diseased world, to give light and sight to them that sit in darkness, and to restrain and conquer evil spirits; you see that Jesus doth this to the bodies of people, and therefore must conclude, this is he that should come to do it to the souls of people; and you are to *look for no other*. To his miracles in the kingdom of nature, he adds this in the kingdom of grace, *ver. 22. to the poor the gospel is preached*; which they knew was to be done by the Messiah, for he was anointed to *preach the gospel to the meek*, *Isa. lxi. 1.* and to *save the souls of the poor and needy*, *Psal. lxxii. 13.* Judge therefore, whether you can look for any other that will more fully answer the characters of the Messiah, and the great intentions of his coming.

4. He gave them an intimation of the danger people were in of being prejudiced against him, notwithstanding these evident proofs of his being the Messiah, *ver. 23. Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me, or scandalized at me*. We are here in a state of trial and probation, and it is agreeable to such a state, that as there are sufficient arguments to *confirm the truth* to those that are *honest and impartial* in searching after it, and have their minds prepared to receive it; so there should be also objections to *cloud the truth*, to those that are careless and worldly, and sensual; Christ's education at Nazareth, his residence in Galilee, the meanness of his family and relations, his poverty, and the despicableness of his followers, these and the like, were stumbling-blocks to many, which all the miracles he wrought, could not help them over: He is *blessed*, for he is wise, and humble, and well disposed, that is not overcome by these prejudices: It is a sign God *blessed* him, for it is by his grace that he is helped over these stumbling-stones; *and he shall be blessed* indeed, blessed in Christ.

Secondly, We have here the high *encomium* which Christ gave of John Baptist; not while his messengers were present, lest he should seem to flatter him, but *when they were departed*, *ver. 24.* to make the people sensible of the advantages they had enjoyed in John's ministry, and were deprived of by his imprisonment. Let them now consider, *What they went out into the wilderness to see*; Who that was, about whom there had been so much talk, and such a great and general amazement. Come, faith Christ, I will tell you.

1. He was a man of unshaken *self-confidence*; a man of steadiness and constancy; he was not *a reed shaken with the wind*, first in one sway, and then in another, shifting with every wind,



he was *firm* as a *rock*, not *fickle* as a *reed*; if he could have bowed like a *reed* to Herod, and have complied with the court, he might have been a favourite there; but *none of these things moved him*.

2. He was a man of unparalleled *self-denial*; a great example of mortification and contempt of the world, he was not a *man clothed in soft raiment*, nor did he *live delicately*, ver. 25. but, on the contrary, he lived in a wilderness, and was clad and fed accordingly; instead of adorning and pampering the body, he brought it under, and kept it in subjection.

3. He was a *prophet*, had his commission and instructions immediately from God, and not of man, or by man. He was by birth a *priest*, but that is never taken notice of; for his glory, as a prophet, eclipsed the honour of his priesthood; nay, he was *more*, he was *much more than a prophet*, ver. 26. than any of the prophets of the Old Testament, for they spake of Christ as at a distance, he spake of him as at the door.

4. He was the harbinger and forerunner of the Messiah, and he was himself prophesied of in the Old Testament, ver. 27. *This is he of whom it is written*, Mal. iii. 1. *Behold, I send my messenger before thy face*. Before he sent the Master himself, he sent a messenger to give notice of his coming, and prepare people to receive him: Had the Messiah been to appear as a *temporal prince*, under which character the carnal Jews expected him, his messenger would have appeared, either in the *pomp* of a *general*, or the *gaiety* of a *herald at arms*; but it was a *previous* indication, plain enough, of the *spiritual* nature of Christ's kingdom, that the messenger he sent before him, to *prepare his way*, did it by preaching repentance, and reformation of mens hearts and lives, certainly that kingdom was not of this world, which was thus ushered in.

5. He was upon this account so great, that really there was not a *greater prophet* than he. *Prophets* were really the *greatest* that were *born of women*, more honourable than kings and princes, and John was the *greatest* of all the *prophets*; the country was not sensible what a *valuable*, what an *invaluable* man it had in it, when John Baptist went about preaching and baptizing. And yet *he that is least in the kingdom of God, is greater than he*. The least gospel minister that has obtained mercy of the Lord, to be *skilful* and *faithful* in his work; or the meanest of the *apostles*, and first preachers of the gospel, being *employed* under a more *excellent* dispensation, are in a more honourable office than John Baptist. The meanest of those that *follow the Lamb*, far excel the greatest of those that went before him. Those therefore who live under the gospel dispensation, have so much the more to answer for.

Thirdly, We have here the just censure of the men of that generation, that were not wrought upon by the ministry, either of John Baptist, or of Jesus Christ himself.

1. Christ here shews what contempt was put upon John Baptist, while he was preaching and baptizing. (1.) Those that did shew him any respect, were but the common ordinary sort of people; that in the eye of the gay part of mankind, were rather a disgrace to him than any credit, ver. 29. *The people indeed, the vulgar herd, of whom it was said, This people who knows not the law, are cursed*, John vii. 49. And the publicans, men of ill fame, as being generally men of ill morals, or taken to be so, these were *baptized with his baptism*, and became his disciples; and these, though glorious monuments of divine grace; yet did not *magnify John* in the eye of the world; but by their repentance and reformation they *justified God*, justified his conduct, and the wisdom of it, in appointing such a one as John Baptist to be the forerunner of the Messiah; they hereby made it to appear, that it was the best method that could be taken, for it was not in vain to *them*, whatever it was to others. (2.) The great men of their church and nation, the *polite*, and the *politicians*, that would have done him some credit in the eye of the world, did him all the dishonour they could; they heard him indeed, but they were not *baptized of him*, ver. 30. the Pharisees that were most in reputation for religion and devotion, and the lawyers that were celebrated for their learning, especially their knowledge of the scriptures, they *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*, they *frustrated it*, they *received the grace of God in the baptism of John, in vain*. God, in sending that messenger among them, had a kind *purpose* of good to them, *designed* their salvation by it, and if they had closed with the counsel of God, it had been *for themselves*, they had been made for ever, but they *rejected it*, would not comply with it, and it was *against themselves*, it was to their own ruin; they came short of the benefit intended them, and not only so, but forfeited the grace of God, put a bar in their own door, and by refusing that discipline, which was to fit them for the kingdom of the Messiah, shut themselves out of it, and they not only excluded themselves, but hindered others, and stood in their way.

2. He here shews the strange *perverseness* of the men of that generation, in their cavils both against John and Christ, and the prejudices they conceived against them.

1. They made but a jesting matter of the methods God took to do them good, ver. 31. *Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation?* What can I think of, absurd enough to represent them by? They are then, *like children sitting in the market-place*, that mind nothing that is serious, but are as full of play as they

can hold; as if God were but in jest with them, in all the methods he takes to do them good, as children are with one another in the market-place, ver. 32. they turn it all off with a banter, and are no more affected with it, than a piece of pageantry. This is the ruin of multitudes, they can never persuade themselves to be *serious* in the concerns of their souls; old men sitting in the Sanhedrin, were but as *children sitting in the market-place*, and the more affected with the things that belonged to their everlasting peace, than people are with childrens play. O the amazing stupidity and vanity of the blind and ungodly world! The Lord awaken them out of their security!

2. They still found something or other to carp at.

1. John Baptist was a reserved, austere man, lived much in solitude, and ought to have been admired, for being such a humble, sober, self-denying man, and hearkened to, as a man of thought, and contemplation; but this which was his praise, was turned to his reproach; because he came *neither eating nor drinking*, so freely, and plentifully, and cheerfully, as others did, *ye say, he has a devil*; he is a melancholy man, he is possessed as the demoniac, whose dwelling was *among the tombs*, though he be not all out so wild.

2. Our Lord Jesus was of a more free and open conversation, he *came eating and drinking*, ver. 34. he would go and dine with Pharisees, though he knew they did not care for him; and with publicans, though he knew they were no credit to him, yet, in hopes of doing good, both to the one and the other, he conversed familiarly with them. By this it appears, that the ministers of Christ may be of very different tempers and dispositions, very different ways of preaching and living, and yet all good and useful; *diversity of gifts*, but each given to *profit withal*; therefore none must make themselves a standard to all others, nor judge hardly of those that do not do just as they do. John Baptist bore witness to Christ, and Christ applauded John Baptist, though they were the reverse of each other in their way of living. But the common enemies of them both, reproached them both. The very same men that had represented John as *crazed in his intellectuals*, because he came *neither eating nor drinking*, represented our Lord Jesus, as *corrupt in his morals*, because he came *eating and drinking*; he is a *gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber*. Ill-will never speaks well. See the malice of wicked people, and how they put the worse construction upon every thing they meet with in the gospel, and in the preachers and professors of it; and hereby they think to diminish them, but really destroy themselves.

Lastly, He shews, that notwithstanding this, God will be glorified in the salvation of a chosen remnant, ver. 35. *Wisdom is justified of all her children*. There are those who are given to wisdom, *as her children*, and they shall be brought, by the grace of God, to submit to wisdom's conduct and government, and thereby to justify wisdom, in the way she takes of bringing them to that submission, for to them they are effectual, and thereby appear well chosen. Wisdom's children are herein *unanimous*, one and all, they have all a complacency in the methods of grace, which divine wisdom takes; and think never the worse of them, for their being *ridiculed* by some.

36. ¶ And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. 37. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster-box of ointment, 38. And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment. 39. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him, saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this* is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. 40. And Jesus answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one ought five hundred pence, and the other fifty. 42. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? 43. Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. 44. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entred into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. 45. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed



anointed my feet with ointment. 47. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. 48. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. 49. And they that sat at meat with him, began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? 50. And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

When and where this passage of story happened, doth not appear, this evangelist doth not observe order of time in his narratives, so much as the other evangelists do; but it comes in here, upon occasion of Christ's being reproached as a *friend to publicans and sinners*, to shew that it was only for their good, and to bring them to repentance, that he conversed with them; and that those he admitted near him were reformed, or in a hopeful way to be so. Who this woman was, that here testified so great an affection to Christ, doth not appear; it is commonly said to be Mary Magdalen, but I find no ground in scripture for it, she is described, chap. viii. 2. and Mark xvi. 9. to be one, *out of whom Christ had cast seven devils*; but that is not mentioned here; and therefore, it is probable, it was not she.

Now observe here,

1. The civil entertainment which a Pharisee gave to Christ, and his gracious acceptance of that entertainment, ver. 36. *one of the Pharisees desired him, that he would eat with him*; either because he thought it would be a reputation to him to have such a guest at his table, or because his company would be an entertainment to him, and his family, and friends. It appears that this Pharisee did not believe in Christ, for he will not own him to be a prophet, ver. 36. and yet our Lord Jesus accepted his invitation, *went into his house and sat down to meat*; that they might see he took the same liberty with Pharisees, that he did with publicans, in hopes of *doing them good*. And those may venture further into the society of such as are prejudiced against Christ, and his religion, who have wisdom and grace sufficient to instruct and argue with them, than others may.

2. The great respects which a poor penitent sinner shewed him, when he was at meat in the Pharisee's house. It was a woman in the city, *that was a sinner*, a Gentile, I doubt, a harlot, known to be so, and infamous; she *knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house*, and having been converted from her wicked course of life, by his preaching, she came to acknowledge her obligations to him, having no opportunity of doing it any other way, than by *washing his feet*, and anointing them with some sweet ointment, that she brought with her for that purpose. The way of sitting at table then was such, as that their feet were partly *behind them*. Now this woman did not look Christ in the face, but came *behind him*, and did the part of the *maid-servant*, whose office it was to *wash the feet* of the guests, 1 Sam. xxv. 41. and to prepare the ointments, 1 Sam. viii. 13.

Now in what this good woman did, We may observe,

(1.) Her *deep humiliation* for sin; she stood behind him *weeping*, her eyes had been the inlets and outlets of sin, and now she makes them fountains of tears. Her face is now *blubbered*, that perhaps used to be *painted*. Her hair now made a towel of, which before had been plaited and adorned. We have reason to think she had before sorrowed for sin, but now she had an opportunity of coming into the presence of Christ, the wound bled afresh, and her sorrow renewed. Note, It well becomes penitents, upon all their approaches to Christ to renew their godly sorrow and shame for sin; *when he is pacified*, Ezek. xvi. ult.

(2.) Her *strong affection* to the Lord Jesus; this was it that our Lord Jesus took special notice of, that she *loved much*, ver. 42, 47. She *washed his feet*, in token of her ready submission to the meanest office, in which she might *do him honour*. Nay, she washed them with *her tears*, tears of joy, she was in a transport, to find herself so near her Saviour, whom her soul loved. She *kissed his feet*, as one unworthy of the kisses of his mouth, which the spouse coveted, Cant. i. 2. It was a kiss of adoration, as well affection; she *wiped them with her hair*, as one entirely devoted to his honour; her eyes shall yield water to wash them, and her hair be a towel to wipe them; and she *anointed his feet with the ointment*; owning him hereby to be the Messiah, the *anointed*; she anointed his feet, in token of her consent to God's design in anointing his head with the *oil of gladness*. Note, All true penitents have a dear love to the Lord Jesus.

3. The offence which the Pharisee took at Christ, for admitting the respects which this poor penitent paid him, ver. 39. *He spake within himself*, little thinking that Christ knew what he thought, *This man, if he were a prophet*, would then have so much *knowledge*, as to perceive that *this woman is a sinner*, is a Gentile, is a woman of ill fame; and so much *sanctity*, as *therefore* not to suffer her to come so near him, for can one of such a character approach a prophet, and his heart not rise at it? See how apt proud and narrow souls are, to think that others should be as haughty and censorious as themselves. Simon, if she had touched him, would have said, *Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am*

*holier than thou*, Isa. lxxv. 5. and he thought Christ should say so too.

4. Christ's justification of the woman, in what she did to him, and of himself, in admitting it. Christ knew what the Pharisee spake *within himself*, and made answer to it. Simon, *I have somewhat to say unto thee*, ver. 41. Though he was kindly entertained at his table, yet even there he reproveth him for what he saw amiss in him, and would not *suffer sin upon him*. Those whom Christ hath *something against*, he hath something to *say to*, for his Spirit shall *reprove*. Simon is willing to give him the hearing, *he saith, Master, say on*. Though he could not believe him to be a prophet, because he was not so nice and precise as he was, yet he can compliment him with the title of *Master*, among those that cry, *Lord, Lord*, but *do not the things which he saith*. Now Christ, in his answer to the Pharisee, reasons thus; it is true, this woman has been a sinner, he knows it; but she is a *pardoned* sinner, which supposeth her to be a *penitent* sinner; that what she did to him, was an expression of her *great love* to her Saviour, by whom her sins were forgiven; that if she was pardoned, who had been *so great a sinner*, it might reasonably be expected, that she should love her Saviour more than others, and should give greater proofs of it than others; and if this was the fruit of her love, and flowing from a sense of the pardon of her sins, it became him to accept of it, and it ill became the Pharisee to be offended at it. Now Christ has a further reach in this; the Pharisee doubted whether he was a *prophet* or no, nay, he did in effect deny it, but Christ shews that he was more than a prophet, for he is one that has *power on earth to forgive sins*, and to whom are owing the affections and thankful acknowledgments of penitent, pardoned, sinners.

Now in his answer,

1. He doth by a parable force Simon to acknowledge, that the greater sinner this woman had been, the greater love she ought to shew to Jesus Christ, when her sins were *pardoned*, ver. 41, 42, 43. A man had *two debtors*, that were both insolvent, but one of them owed him *ten times* more than the other; he very freely *forgave them both*, and did not take the advantage of the law against them, did not order them and their children to be sold, or *deliver them to the tormentors*: Now they were both sensible of the great kindness they had received, but *which of them will love him most*? Certainly, saith the Pharisee, he to *whom he forgave most*, and herein he rightly judged. Now we being obliged to *forgive*, as we are, and hope to be *forgiven*, we may from hence learn the duty between debtor and creditor. (1.) The *debtor*, if he have *any thing to pay*, ought to make satisfaction to his *creditor*. No man can reckon that *his own*, or have any comfortable enjoyment of it, but that which is so when *all his debts are paid*. (2.) If God in his providence hath disabled the debtor to pay his debt, the creditor ought not to be severe with him, nor to go to the utmost rigor of the law with him, but *freely to forgive him*. *Summum jus est summa injuria*. Let the unmerciful creditor read that parable, Mat. xviii. 23, &c. and tremble, for they shall have judgment without mercy, that shew no mercy. (3.) The debtor, that has found his creditors merciful, ought to be very grateful to them; and if he cannot otherwise recompense them, ought to love them. Some insolvent debtors, instead of being *grateful*, are *spightful* to their creditors that lose by them, and cannot give them a good word, only because they complain, whereas losers may have leave to speak: But this parable speaks of God as the creditor, (or rather the Lord Jesus himself, for he it is that forgives, and is beloved by the debtor) and sinners are the debtors: And so we may learn here,

1. That *sin is a debt*, and *sinners are debtors* to God almighty. As creatures we owe a debt, a debt of obedience to the precept of the law, and for non-payment of that as sinners, we become liable to the penalty. We have not paid our rent, nay, we have wasted our Lord's goods, and so we become debtors. God has an action against us for the injury we have done him, and the omission of our duty to him.

2. That some are deeper in debt to God, by reason of sin, than others are; *one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty*. The Pharisee was the less debtor, yet he a debtor too, which was more than he thought himself, but rather that God was his debtor, Luke xviii. 10, 11. This woman, that had been a scandalous notorious sinner, was the *greater debtor*. Some sins are, in themselves, greater debts than others, and some sinners, by reason of divers aggravating circumstances, greater debtors. As those that have sinned most openly and scandalously, that have sinned against greater light and knowledge, more convictions and warnings, and more mercies and means.

3. That whether our debt be more or less, it is *more* than we are able to pay. *They had nothing to pay*, nothing at all to make a composition with, for the debt is great, and we have nothing at all to pay it with; silver and gold will not pay our debt, nor will sacrifice and offering, no not *thousands of rams*. No righteousness of our own will pay it, no not our repentance and obedience for the future; for it is what we are already bound to, and it is God that works it in us.

4. That the God of heaven is *ready to forgive*, *frankly to forgive*, poor sinners upon gospel terms, though their debt be never so great. If we repent and believe in Christ, our iniquity shall not



not be our ruin, it shall not be laid to our charge, God has proclaimed his name gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive sin; and his Son having purchased pardon for penitent believers, his gospel promifeth it to them, and his Spirit seals it, and gives them the comfort of it.

5. That those who have their sins *pardoned*, are obliged to love him that pardoned them; and the more is forgiven them, the more they should love him. The greater sinners any have been before their conversion, the greater saints they should be after; the more they should study to do for God, and the more their hearts should be enlarged in obedience. When a persecuting Saul, became a preaching Paul, he laboured more abundantly.

2. He applies this parable to the different temper and carriage of the Pharisee, and the sinner, towards Christ. Though the Pharisee would not allow Christ to be a prophet, Christ seems ready to allow him to be in a justified state, and that he was one forgiven, though to him *less was forgiven*. He did indeed shew some love to Christ in inviting him to his house, but nothing to what this poor woman shewed. Look thee, saith Christ to him, she is one that has much forgiven her, and therefore, according to thine own judgment, it might be expected she should love much more than thou dost, and so it appears, *ver. 44. Seest thou this woman?* Thou lookest upon her with contempt, but consider what a kinder friend she is to me than thou art; should I then accept thy kindness, and refuse her's?

1. Thou didst not so much as order a basin of water to be brought to wash my feet in, when I came in wearied and dirtied with my walk, which would have been some refreshment to me; but she has done much more, *she hath washed my feet with tears*, tears of affection to me, tears of affliction for sin, and has *wiped them with the hairs of her head*, in token of her great love to me.

2. Thou didst not so much as kiss my cheek, which was an usual expression of a hearty and affectionate welcome to a friend, but *this woman hath not ceased to kiss my feet*, *ver. 45.* thereby expressing both a humble and an affectionate love.

3. Thou didst not provide me a little common oil as usual to anoint my head with, but she has bestowed a box of *precious ointment upon my feet*, *ver. 46.* so far hath she out-done thee. The reason why some people blame the pains and expence of zealous Christians in religion is, because they are not willing themselves to come up to it, but resolve to rest in a *cheap and easy* religion.

3. He silenced the Pharisee's cavil, *ver. 47. I say unto thee, Simon, her sins which are many, are forgiven.* He owns she had been guilty of many sins, but they are forgiven her, and therefore it is no way unbecoming me to accept her kindness. They are forgiven, for she loved much. It should be rendered, *therefore she loved much*; for it is plain, by the tenor of Christ's discourse, that her loving much was not the cause, but the effect of her pardon, and of her comfortable sense of it; for *we love God* because he first loved us; he did not forgive us because we first loved him. But to whom little is forgiven, as is to thee, the same loveth little, as thou dost. Hereby he intimates to the Pharisee that his love to Christ was so little, that he had reason to question whether he loved him at all in sincerity; and consequently whether indeed his sins, though comparatively little, were forgiven him. Instead of grudging great sinners the mercy they find with Christ upon their repentance, we should be stirred up by their example to examine ourselves, whether we be indeed forgiven, and do love Christ.

4. He silenced her fears, who probably was discouraged by the Pharisee's offence, and yet would not so far yield to the discouragement as to fly off. (1.) Christ said unto her, *Thy sins are forgiven*, *ver. 48.* Note, The more we express our sorrow for sin, and our love to Christ, the clearer evidence we have of the forgiveness of our sins; for it is by the experience of a *work of grace wrought in us*, that we obtain the assurance of an *aet of grace wrought for us*. How well was she paid for her pains and cost, when she was dismissed with this word from Christ, *Thy sins are forgiven*, and what an effectual prevention would this be of her return to sin again?

(2.) Though there were those present who quarrelled with Christ in their own minds for presuming to forgive sin, and pronounce sinners absolved, *ver. 49.* as those had done, *Matt. ix. 3.* yet he stood to what he had said; for as he had there proved that he had power to forgive sin, by curing the man sick of the palsy, and therefore would not here take notice of the cavil, so he would now shew that he had pleasure in forgiving sin, and it was his delight; he loves to speak pardon and peace to penitents, *ver. 50. He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee.* This would confirm and double her comfort in the forgiveness of her sin, that she was justified by her faith. All these expressions of sorrow for sin, and love to Christ, were the effects and products of faith; and therefore as faith of all graces doth most honour God, so Christ doth of all graces put most honour upon faith. Note, They who know their faith hath saved them, may go in peace, may go on their way rejoicing.

## C H A P. VIII.

Most of this chapter is a repetition of divers passages of Christ's preaching and miracles, which we had before in Matthew and Mark, and they are all of such weight, that they are worth repeating, and therefore they are repeated, that out of the mouth not only of two, but of three witnesses every word may be established. Here is, (1.) A general account of Christ's preaching, and how he had subsistence for himself and his numerous family, by the charitable contributions of good people, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) The parable of the sower, and the four sorts of ground, with the exposition of it, and some inferences from it, *ver. 4—18.* (3.) The preference which Christ gave to his obedient disciples, before his nearest relations according to the flesh, *ver. 19—21.* (4.) His stilling a storm at sea with a word's speaking, *ver. 22—25.* (5.) His casting a legion of devils out of a man that was possessed by them, *ver. 26—40.* (6.) His healing the woman that had the bloody issue, and raising Jairus's daughter to life, *ver. 41—56.*

1. **A**ND it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village preaching, and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him; 2. And certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, 3. And Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

We are here told,

1. What Christ made the constant business of his life, and that was preaching; in that work he was indefatigable, and went about doing good, *ver. 1.* afterward, *ἐν τῷ κηδεῖν, ordinae*, in the proper time or method. Christ took his work before him, and went about it regularly; he observed a series, or order of business, so as that the end of one good work was the beginning of another. Now observe here, (1.) Where he preached; he went about, *διώδευε, peragrabat*. He was an itinerant preacher, did not confine himself to one place, but diffused the beams of his light. Circuibat, he went his circuit as a judge, having found his preaching perhaps most acceptable where it was new. He went about through every city, that none might plead ignorance. Hereby he set an example to his disciples; they must traverse the nations of the earth, as he did the cities of Israel. Nor did he confine himself to the cities, but went into the villages among the plain country people to preach, to the inhabitants of the villages, *Judg. v. 11.*

(2.) What he preached. He shewed the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, that it was now to be set up among them. Tidings of the kingdom of God are glad tidings, and those Jesus Christ came to bring; to tell the children of men that God was willing to take all those under his protection, that were willing to return to their allegiance; it was glad tidings to the world, that there was hope of its being reformed and reconciled.

(3.) Who were his attendants. The twelve were with him, not to preach if he were present, but to learn from him what, and how to preach hereafter; and, if occasion were, to be sent to places where he could not go. Happy were these his servants that heard his wisdom.

2. Whence he had the necessary supports of life, he lived upon the kindness of his friends. There were certain women who frequently attended his ministry, that ministered to him of their substance, *ver. 2, 3.* Some of them are named, but there were many others, who were zealously affected to the doctrine of Christ, and thought themselves bound in justice to encourage it, having themselves found benefit, and in charity, hoping that many others might find benefit by it too.

1. They were such for the most part as had been Christ's patients, and were the monuments of his power and mercy; they had been healed by him of evil spirits and infirmities. Some of them had been troubled in mind and melancholy, others of them afflicted in body, and he had been to them a powerful healer: he is the physician both of body and soul, and those who have been healed by him, ought to study what they shall render to him. We are bound in interest to attend him, that we may be ready to apply ourselves to him for help in case of a relapse; and we are bound in gratitude to serve him and his gospel, who hath saved us, and saved us by it.

2. One of them was Mary Magdalen, out of whom had been cast seven devils; a certain number for an uncertain. Some think she was one that had been very wicked, and then we may suppose her to be the woman that was a sinner, mentioned just before chap. vii. And Dr. Lightfoot finding in some of the Talmudists writings that Mary Magdalen, signified Mary the plaiter of hair, thinks it applicable to her, she having been noted in the days of her iniquity and infamy, for that plaiting of hair, which is opposed to modest apparel, 1 Tim. ii. 9. But though she had been an im-



modest woman, upon her repentance and reformation she found mercy, and became a zealous disciple of Christ. Note, The greatest of sinners must not despair of pardon; and the worse any have been before their conversion, the more they should study to do for Christ after. Or rather, she was one that had been *very melancholy*, and then probably it was Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who was a woman of a *sorrowful spirit*; might be originally of Magdala, but removed to Bethany. This Mary Magdalen was attending on Christ's cross and his sepulchre, and if she were not Mary the sister of Lazarus, either that particular friend and favourite of Christ's did not attend then, or the evangelists did not take notice of her, neither of which we can suppose, thus Dr. Lightfoot argues; yet there is this to be objected against it, that Mary Magdalen is reckoned *among the women that followed Jesus from Galilee*, Matt. xxvii. 55, 56. whereas Mary the sister of Lazarus had her residence in Bethany.

3. Another of them was *Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward*; she had been his wife, so some, but was now a widow, and left in good circumstances; if she was now his wife, we have reason to think that her husband, though preferred in Herod's court, had received the gospel, and was very willing that his wife should be both a hearer of Christ, and a contributor to him.

4. There were many of them that *ministered to Christ of their substance*. It was an instance of the meanness of that condition to which our Saviour humbled himself that he needed it, and his great humility and condescension that he accepted it. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes *he became poor*, and lived upon alms. Let none say they scorn to be beholden to the charity of their neighbours, when providence has brought them into straits; but let them ask it, and be thankful for it as a favour. Christ would rather be beholden to his known friends for a maintenance for himself and his disciples, than be burthensome to strangers in the cities and villages whither he came to preach. Note, It is the duty of those who are taught in the word, to communicate to them who teach them in all good things: and those who are herein liberal, and chearful, honour the Lord with their substance, and bring a blessing upon it.

4. ¶ And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: 5. A sower went out to sow his seed: as he sowed, some fell by the ways side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. 6. And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. 7. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. 8. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. 9. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? 10. And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. 11. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12. Those by the way-side, are they that hear: then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13. They on the rock, *are they*, which when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. 14. And that which fell among thorns, are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection. 15. But that on the good ground, are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. 16. ¶ No man when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed: but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. 17. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest: neither any thing hid, that shall not be known, and come abroad. 18. Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. 19. ¶ Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. 20. And it was told him by *certain*, which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. 21. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

The former paragraph began with an account of Christ's industry in *preaching*, ver. 1. this begins with an account of the people's industry in *hearing*, ver. 4. He *went into every city* to preach; so they, one would think, should have contented themselves to hear him when he came to their own city; we know those that would: but there were those here that came to him *out of every city*, would not stay till he came to them, nor think they had had enough when he left them, but met him when he was coming towards them, and followed him, when he was going from them. Nor did he excuse himself with this from going to the cities, that there were some from the cities that came to him; for though there were, yet the most had not zeal enough to bring them to him, and therefore such is his wonderful condescension, that he will go to them; for *he is found of those that sought him not*, Isa. lxxv. 1.

Here was, it seems, a vast concourse, *much people were gathered together*, abundance of fish to cast the net among; and he was as ready, and willing to *teach*, as they were to be taught. Now in these verses we have,

First, Necessary and excellent rules and cautions for hearing the word in the parable of the sower, and the reddition and application of it, all which we had twice before more largely. When Christ had put forth this parable, (1.) The disciples were *inquisitive* concerning the meaning of it, ver. 9. they asked him *what might this parable be?* Note, We should covet earnestly to know the true intent, and full extent of the word we hear, that we may neither be *mistaken* in our own knowledge, nor *defective* in it. (2.) Christ made them sensible of what great advantage it was to them, that they had opportunity of acquainting themselves with the mystery and meaning of his word, which others had not, ver. 10. *Unto you it is given*. Note, Those who would receive instruction from Christ, must know and consider what a privilege it is to be instructed by him, what a distinguishing privilege to be led into the light, such a light, when others are left in darkness, such a darkness. Happy are we, and for ever indebted to free grace, if the same thing that is a *parable* to others, with which they are only *amused*, is a *plain truth* to us, by which we are *enlightened* and *governed*, and into the mold of which we are *delivered*.

Now from the parable itself, and the explication of it. Observe,

1. The *heart of man* is as *soil* to the *seed of God's word*; it is capable of receiving it, and bringing forth the fruits of it; but unless that seed be sown in it, it will bring forth nothing valuable, our care therefore must be to bring the *seed* and the *soil* together. To what purpose have we the *seed* in the scripture, if it be not *sown*? and to what purpose have we the soil in our own hearts, if it be not sown with that seed?

2. The *success* of the *seedness* is very much according to the nature and temper of the *soil*, and as that is, or is not disposed to receive the seed. The word of God is to us as we are, a *savour of life unto life*, or of *death unto death*.

3. The devil is a subtil and spiteful enemy, that makes it his business to hinder our profiting by the word of God. He takes the word out of the hearts of *careless* hearers, ver. 12. *lest they should believe and be saved*, that is added here to teach us, 1. That we cannot be *saved* unless we *believe*: The word of the gospel will not be a saving word to us, unless it be mixed with faith. 2. That therefore the devil doth all he can to keep us from *believing*, to make us not heed the word when we read and hear it; or if we heed it for the present, to make us forget it again, and let it slip, (Heb. ii. 1.) or if we remember it, to create prejudices in our minds against it, or *direct* our minds from it to something else; and all is, *lest we should believe and be saved*, lest we should believe and *rejoice*, while he believes and *trembles*.

4. Where the word of God is heard *carelessly*, there is commonly a *contempt* put upon it too. It is added here in the parable, that the seed which fell by the way-side was *trodden down*, ver. 5. They that wilfully shut their ears against the word, do in effect trample it under their feet; they *despise the commandment of the Lord*.

5. Those on whom the word makes *some* impressions, but they are not *deep* and *durable* ones, will shew their hypocrisy in a time of trial; as the seed sown upon the rock where it gains no root, ver. 13. these *for a while believe*, a little while; their profession promiseth something, but in *time of temptation* they fall away from their good beginnings; whether the temptation arise from the smiles, or from the frowns of the world, they are easily overcome by it.

6. That the *pleasures of this life* are as dangerous, and mischievous thorns to choke the good seed of the word, as any other. That is added here, ver. 14. which was not in the other evangelists. Those that are *not entangled in the cares of this life*, nor inveigled with the *deceitfulness of riches*, but boast that they are dead to them, yet may be kept from heaven by an affected indolence, and the love of ease and pleasure. The delights of sense may ruin the soul, even lawful delights indulged, and too much delighted in.

7. That it is not enough that the fruit be brought forth, but it must be *brought to perfection*, it must be fully ripened, if it be not, it is as if there were no fruit at all brought forth; for that which



which in Matthew and Mark is said to be *unfruitful*, is the same that here is said to *bring forth none to perfection*: For, *factum non dicitur quod non perseverat*.

8. The good ground which brings forth *good fruit*, is an *honest* and *good heart*, well disposed to receive instruction and commandment, *ver. 19.* a heart free from sinful pollutions, and firmly fixed for God and duty, an upright heart, a tender heart, and a heart that *trembles at the word* is an honest and good heart; that having heard the word *understands* it, so it is in Matthew; that *receives* it, so it is in Mark; and *keeps* it, so it is here, as the soil not only *receives*, but keeps the seed; and the stomach not only receives, but keeps the food or physick.

9. Where the word is well kept, there is fruit brought forth with *patience*; that also is added here; there must be both *bearing* patience, and *waiting* patience; patience to suffer the tribulation and *persecution* which may arise because of the word: Patience to continue to the end in well-doing.

10. In consideration of all this, we ought to take *heed how we hear*, *ver. 18.* take heed of those things that will hinder our profiting by the word we hear, watch over our hearts in hearing, and take heed lest they betray us. Take heed *lest* we hear carelessly and slightly, lest we entertain prejudices against the word we hear upon any account; and take heed to the frame of our spirits after we have heard the word, lest we lose what we have gained.

2. Needful instructions given to those that are appointed to preach the word, and to those also that have heard it.

(1.) Those that have *received the gift* must *minister the same*. Ministers that have the dispensing of the gospel committed to them, people that have profited by the word, and are thereby qualified to profit others, must look upon themselves as *lighted candles*; ministers must in solemn authoritative preaching, and people in brotherly, familiar discourse, diffuse their light: for *a candle* must not be *covered with a vessel*, or *put under a bed*, *ver. 16.* Ministers and Christians are to be lights in the world, *holding forth the word of life*, their light must shine before men; they must not only *be good*, but *do good*.

(2.) We must expect that what is now done *in secret*, and from unseen springs, will shortly be *manifested* and *made known*, *ver. 17.* What is committed to you *in secret*, should be made manifest by you; for your Master did not give you talents to be buried, but to be traded with: Let that which is now hid be *made known*, for if it be not manifested by you, it will be manifested *against you*, will be produced in evidence of your treachery.

(3.) The gifts we have will either be continued to us, or taken from us, according as we do, or do not make use of them for the glory of God and the edification of our brethren, *ver. 18.* *Whoever hath to him shall be given*; he that hath gifts, and doth good with them, shall have more; he that *buries his talent*, shall lose it. From him that has not, shall be taken away even that which he hath, so it is in Mark, that which he *seemeth to have*, so it is in Luke. Note, The grace that is lost was but *seeming* grace, was never *true*. Men do but *seem* to have what they do not use, and shews of religion will be lost and forfeited; they *went out from us*, because they were not of us, 1 John ii. 19. Let us see to it that we have grace in sincerity, the *root of the matter* found in us, and that is a good part which shall never be taken away from those that have it.

3. Great encouragement given to those that prove themselves faithful *hearers of the word*, by being *doers of the work*, in a particular instance of Christ's respect to his disciples, in preferring them even before his nearest relations, *ver. 19, 20, 21.* which passage of story we had twice before. Observe, (1.) What crowding there was after Christ, there was no coming near for the throng of people that attended him; who though they were crowded never so much, would not be crowded out from his congregation. (2.) That some of his nearest kindred were least solicitous to hear him preach. Instead of getting *within*, as they might easily have done, if they had come in time, desiring to *hear him*, they stood without desiring to *see him*; and probably out of a foolish fear, lest he should spend himself with too much speaking, designing nothing but to interrupt him, and oblige him to break off. (3.) That Jesus Christ would rather be busy at his work than conversing with his friends. He would not leave his preaching to speak with *his mother* and *his brethren*, for it was his *meat and drink* to be so employed. (4.) That Christ is pleased to own those as his nearest and dearest relations, that *hear the word of God*, and *do it*; they are to him more than *his mother* and *brethren*.

22. ¶ Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they lunched forth. 23. But as they sailed, he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake, and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. 24. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water: and

they ceased, and there was a calm. 25. And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this? for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him. 26. ¶ And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. 27. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city, a certain man which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. 28. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee torment me not. 29. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains, and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness) 30. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entred into him. 31. And they besought him, that he would not command them to go out into the deep. 32. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. 33. Then went the devils out of the man, and entred into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. 34. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. 35. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 36. They also which saw it, told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils, was healed. 37. ¶ Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about, besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again. 38. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed, besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39. Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city, how great things Jesus had done unto him.

We have here two illustrious proofs of the power of our Lord Jesus, which we had before: His power over the winds, and his power over the devils.

First, His power over the winds, those powers of the air that are so much a terror to men, especially upon sea, and occasion the death of such multitudes. Observe,

1. Christ ordered his disciples to put to sea, that he might shew his glory upon the water in stilling the waves, and might do an act of kindness to a poor possessed man on the other side the water, *ver. 22.* He went into a ship with his disciples. They that observe Christ's orders, may assure themselves of his presence. If Christ sends his disciples, he goes with them: And those may safely and boldly venture any whither, that have Christ accompanying them. He said, Let us go over unto the other side, for he had a piece of good work to do there. He might have gone by land, a little way about, but he chose to go by water, that he might shew his wonders in the deep.

2. Those that put to sea in a calm, yea, and at Christ's word, yet must prepare for a storm, and for the utmost peril in that storm, *ver. 23.* There came down a storm of wind on the lake, as if it were there and no where else, and presently their ship was so tossed that it was filled with water, and they were in jeopardy of their lives. Perhaps the devil, who is the prince of the power of the air, and who raiseth winds by the permission of God, had some suspicion, perhaps, from some words that Christ might let fall that he was coming over the lake now, on purpose to cast that legion of devils out of the poor man, on the other side, and therefore poured this storm upon the ship he was in, designing, if possible, to have sunk him, and prevented that victory.

3. Christ was asleep in the storm, *ver. 23.* Some bodily refreshment he must have, and chose to take it then when it would be least a hindrance to him in his work. The disciples of Christ may really have his gracious presence with them at sea, and in a storm, and yet he may seem as if he were asleep; may not presently appear for their relief, no, not when things seem to be brought even to the last extremity. Thus he will try their faith and patience, and quicken them by prayer to awake, and make their deliverance the more welcome when it comes at last.

4. A com-



4. A complaint to Christ of our danger, and the distress his church is in, is enough to engage him to awake, and appear for us, *ver. 24.* They cried, *Master, Master, we perish.* The way to have our fears silenced, is to bring them to Christ, and lay them before him. Those that in sincerity call Christ *Master*, and with faith and fervency call upon him as their *Master*, may be sure he will not let them *perish*. No relief for poor souls that are under sense of guilt, and fear of wrath, like this, to go to Christ and call him *Master*, and say, *I am undone if thou do not help me.*

5. Christ's business is to *lay storms*, as it is Satan's business to *raise* them. He can do it, he has done it, he delights to do it, for he came to *proclaim peace on earth*, *ver. 24.* He *rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water*, and immediately *they ceased*, not as at other times, by degrees, but all of a sudden *there was a great calm.* Thus Christ shewed, that though the devil pretends to be the prince of the power of the air, yet even there he has him in a chain.

6. When our dangers are over, it becomes us to take to our selves the shame of our own fears, and to give to Christ the glory of his power. When Christ had turned the *storm* into a *calm*, *then were they glad because they were quiet*, *Psal. cvii. 30.* And then, (1.) Christ gives them a rebuke for their inordinate fear, *ver. 25.* *Where is your faith?* Note, Many that have *true faith*, have it to seek when they have occasion to use it; they tremble, and are discouraged, if second causes frown upon them, a little thing disheartens them, and *where is their faith* then? (2.) They give him the glory of his power; *they being afraid, wondered.* Those that had feared the storm, now the danger was over, with good reason feared him that had stilled it; and *said one to another, what manner of man is this?* They might as well have said, *Who is a God like unto thee?* For it is God's prerogative to *still the noise of the sea, the noise of the waves*, *Psal. lxxv. 7.*

Secondly, His power over the devil, the prince of the power of the air: In the next passage of story he comes into a closer grapple with him than he did when he commanded the winds. Presently after the winds were stilled, they were brought to their desired haven, and *arrived at the country of the Gadarenes*, and there went ashore, *ver. 26, 27.* and he soon met with that which was his business over, and thought it worth his while to go through a storm to it.

We may learn a great deal out of this story concerning this world of infernal, malignant spirits, which though not working now ordinarily, in the same way as here, yet we are all concerned at all times to stand upon our guard against.

1. These malignant spirits are very numerous. They that had taken possession of this one man called themselves *legion*, *ver. 30.* because *many devils were entered into him*: He had had devils a long time, *ver. 27.* But perhaps those that had been long in possession of him, upon some foresight of our Saviour's coming to make an attack upon them, and finding they could not prevent it by the storm they had raised, sent for recruits, intending this to be a *decisive* battle, and hoping now to be too hard for him that had cast out so many unclean spirits, and to give him a defeat; and either were, or at least would be thought to be a *legion* of them, formidable as an *army with banners*; and now at least, to be what the *twentieth legion* of the Roman army which was long quartered at Chester was stiled, *legio victrix*, a *victorious legion*.

2. They have an *inveterate enmity* to man, and all his conveniences and comforts. This man in whom the devils had got possession, and kept it long, being under their influence, *wore no clothes, neither abode in any house*, *ver. 27.* though *clothing*, and a *habitation*, are two of the necessary supports of this life. Nay, and because man has a natural dread of the habitations of the dead, they forced this man to *abide in the tombs*, to make him so much the more a terror to himself, and to all about him, so that his soul had as much cause as ever any man's had to be weary of his life, and to *chuse strangling and death rather*.

3. They are very *strong* and *fierce*, and unruly, and hated, and scorn to be restrained, *ver. 29.* *He was kept bound in chains and in fetters*, that he might not be mischievous either to others or to himself, but he *brake the bands*. Note, Those that are *ungovernable* by any other, thereby shew that they are under Satan's government: And this is the language of those that are so, even concerning God and Christ their best friends, that would not either bind them *from*, or bind them *to*, any thing but for their own good, *Let us break their bands in sunder.* *He was driven of the devil*; those that are under Christ's government, are *sweetly led* with the cords of a man, and the bands of love; those that are under the devil's government are *furiouly driven*.

4. They are much enraged against our Lord Jesus, and have a great dread and horror of him. *When the man*, whom they had possession of, and who spake as they would have him, *saw Jesus*, he *roared out* as one in an agony, and *fell down before him* to deprecate his wrath, and owned him to be *the Son of God most high*, that was infinitely above him, and quite too hard for him; but protested against having any league, or confederacy with him, (which might sufficiently have silenced the blasphemous cavils of the scribes and Pharisees) *What have I to do with thee?* The devils have neither inclination to do service to Christ, nor expectation to receive benefit by him; *What have we to do with*

*thee?* But they dreaded his power and wrath, *I beseech thee torment me not.* They do not say, *I beseech thee save me*, but only *torment me not.* See whose language they speak that have only a dread of hell as a place of torment, but no desire of heaven as a place of holiness and love.

5. They are perfectly *at the command*, and under the power of our Lord Jesus, and they knew it, for they *besought him that he would not command them to go eis τὸν ἄβυσσόν*, *into the deep*, the place of their torment, which they acknowledge he could easily and justly do. O what a comfort is this to the Lord's people, that all the powers of darkness are under the check and controul of the Lord Jesus! he has them all in a chain. He can send them to *their own place* when he pleaseth.

6. They delight in *doing mischief*. When they found there was no remedy, but they must quit the hold of this poor man, they begged they might have leave to take possession of a *herd of swine*, *ver. 32.* When the devil at first brought man into a miserable state, he brought a curse likewise upon the whole creation, and that became subject to enmity. And here as an instance of that extensive enmity of his when he could not destroy the man, he would destroy the swine. If he could not hurt them in their bodies, he would hurt them in their goods, which sometimes proves a great temptation to men to draw them from Christ, as here. Christ *suffered them to enter into the swine*, to convince the country what mischief the devil could do in it, if he should suffer him. No sooner had the devils leave, but they entered into the *swine*; and no sooner had they entered into them, but the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were drowned. For it is a miracle of mercy, if those whom Satan possesseth are not brought to *destruction and perdition*. This, and other instances shew that that roaring lion and red dragon, seek *what*, and whom he may devour.

7. When the devil's power is broke in any soul, that soul recovers itself, and returns into a right frame; which supposeth, that those whom Satan gets possession of, are put out of the possession of themselves. *The man out of whom the devils were departed, sat at the feet of Jesus*, *ver. 35.* while he was under the devil's power, he was ready to *fly in the face* of Jesus, but now he *sits at his feet*; which is a sign that he is come to his *right mind*. If God have possession of us, he preserves to us the government and enjoyment of ourselves, but if Satan have possession of us, he robs us of both; let his power therefore in our souls be overturned, and let him come, whose right our hearts are, and give them him; for we are never more our own, than when we are his.

Let us now see what was the effect of this miracle, of casting the legion of devils out of this man.

1. What effect it had upon the people of that country, who had lost their swine by it. *The swineherds went and told it both in city and country*, *ver. 34.* perhaps with a design to incense people against Christ; they told *by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed*, *ver. 36.* that it was by sending the devils into the swine, which was capable of an invidious representation, as if Christ could not otherwise have delivered the man out of their hands, but by delivering the swine into them. *The people came out to see what was done*, and to enquire into it, and *they were afraid*, *ver. 35.* they were taken with great fear, *ver. 37.* they were surprized and amazed at it, and knew not what to say to it; they thought more of the destruction of the swine, than of the deliverance of their poor afflicted neighbour, and of the country from the terror of his frenzy, for it was become a publick nuisance; and therefore *the whole multitude besought Christ to depart from them*, for fear he should bring other judgment upon them; whereas indeed none need to be afraid of Christ that are willing to forsake their sins, and give up themselves to him. But Christ took them at their word; he *went up into the ship, and returned back again*. Those lose their Saviour and their hopes in him, that love their swine better.

2. What effect it had upon the poor man, who had recovered himself by it. He desired Christ's company as much as others dreaded it, he besought Christ that *he might be with him*, as others were, *that had been healed by him of evil spirits and infirmities*, *ver. 2.* that Christ might be to him a protector, and teacher, and that he might be to Christ for a name and a praise. He was loth to stay among those rude and brutish Gadarenes, that desired Christ to depart from them. *O gather not my soul with these sinners!* But Christ would not take him along with him, but sent him home, to publish among those that knew him, the great things God had done for him, and so might be a blessing to his country as he had been a burthen to it. We must sometimes deny ourselves the satisfaction even of spiritual benefits and comforts, to gain an opportunity of being serviceable to the souls of others. Perhaps Christ knew that when the resentment of the loss of their swine was a little over, they would be better disposed to consider the miracle, and therefore left the man among them to be a standing monument, and a monitor to them of it.

40. And it came to pass, that when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him. 41. ¶ And behold, there came a man



man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: 42. For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. (But as he went, the people thronged him. 43. ¶ And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, 44. Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. 45. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 46. And Jesus said, Some body hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. 47. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people, for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. 48. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace. 49. ¶ While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogues house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. 50. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. 51. And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. 52. And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. 53. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. 54. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. 55. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. 56. And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

Christ was driven away by the Gadarenes, they were weary of him, and willing to be rid of him: But when he had crossed the water, and returned to the Galileans, they gladly received him; wished and waited for his return, and welcomed him with all their hearts when he did return, ver. 40. If some will not accept the favours Christ offers them, others will. If the Gadarenes be not gathered, yet there are many, among whom Christ shall be glorious. When Christ had done his work on the other side the water, he returned and found work to do in the place whence he came, fresh work. They that will lay out themselves to do good, shall never want occasion for it. The wanting you have always with you.

We have here two miracles interwoven, as they were in Matthew and Mark: The raising of Jairus's daughter to life, and the cure of the woman that had an issue of blood, as he was going in a crowd to Jairus's house. We have here,

First, A publick address made to Christ, by a ruler of the synagogue, whose name was Jairus, on the behalf of a little daughter of his, that was very ill, and, in the apprehension of all about her, lay a dying. This address was very humble and reverent; Jairus, though a ruler, fell down at Jesus's feet, as owning him to be a ruler above him. It was very importunate, he besought him that he would come into his house; not having the faith, at least not having the thought of the centurion, that desired Christ only to speak the healing word at a distance: But Christ complied with his request, he went along with him; strong faith shall be applauded, and yet weak faith shall not be rejected. In the houses where sickness and death is, it is very desirable to have the presence of Christ. When Christ was going, the people thronged him, some out of curiosity to see him, others out of an affection to him. Let us not complain of a crowd and a throng, and a hurry, as long as we are in the way of our duty, and doing good; but otherwise, it is what every wise man will keep himself out of, as much as he can.

Secondly, Here is a secret application made to Christ, by a woman ill of a bloody issue, which had been the consumption of her body, and the consumption of her purse too, for she had spent all her living upon physicians, and was never the better, ver. 43. The nature of her disease was such, that she did not care for making a publick complaint of it, it was agreeable to the modesty of her sex, to be very shy of speaking of it, and therefore she took this opportunity of coming to Christ in a crowd; and the more people were present, the more likely she thought it was, that she should be concealed. Her faith was very strong, for she doubted not, but by the touch of the hem of his garment, she should derive from him healing virtue, sufficient for her relief, looking upon

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him to be such a full fountain of mercies, that she should steal a cure, and he not miss it. Thus there is many a poor soul healed and helped, and saved by Christ, that is lost in a crowd, and that no body takes notice of. The woman found an immediate change for the better in herself, and that her disease was cured, ver. 44. As believers have comfortable communion with Christ, so they have comfortable communications from him incognito; meat to eat, that the world knows not of, and joy that a stranger doth not intermeddle with.

Thirdly, Here is a discovery of this secret cure, to the glory both of the Physician and the patient.

1. Christ takes notice that there is a cure wrought, virtue is gone out of me, ver. 46. Those that have been healed by virtue, derived from Christ, must own it, for he knows it. He speaks of it here, not in a way of complaint, as if he were hereby either weakened, or wronged, but in a way of complacency; it was his delight, that virtue was gone out of him to do any good, and he did not grudge it to the meanest, they were as welcome to it, as to the light and heat of the sun; nor had he the less virtue in him, for the going out of virtue from him, for he is an overflowing fountain.

2. The poor patient owns her case, and the benefit she had received, ver. 47. When she saw that she was not hid, she came and fell down before him. Note, The consideration of this that we cannot be hid from Christ, should engage us to pour out our hearts before him, and to shew before him all our sin, and all our trouble. She came trembling, and yet her faith saved her, ver. 48. Note, There may be trembling, where yet there is saving faith. She declared before all the people, for what cause she had touched him, because she believed that a touch would cure her, and it did so. Christ's patients should communicate their experiences to one another.

3. The great Physician confirms her cure, and sends her away with the comfort of it, ver. 48. Be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole. Jacob got the blessing from Isaac clandestinely, and by a wile; but when the fraud was discovered, Isaac ratified it designedly; it was obtained surreptitiously, and under-hand, but it was secured and seconded above-board, so was the cure here. He is blessed, and he shall be blessed; so here, she is healed, and she shall be healed.

Fourthly, Here is an encouragement to Jairus not to distrust the power of Christ, though his daughter was now dead, and they that brought him the tidings, advised him not to give the Master any further trouble about her; fear not, faith Christ, believe only. Note, Our faith in Christ should be bold and daring, as well as our zeal for him. And they that are willing to do any thing for him, may depend upon his doing great things for them, above what they are able to ask or think. When the patient is dead, there is no room for prayer, or the use of means; but here, though the child is dead, yet believe, and all shall be well. Post mortem Medicus is an absurdity, but not Post mortem Christus.

Fifthly, The preparatives for the raising of her to life again. (1.) The choice Christ made of witnesses that should see the miracle wrought. A crowd followed him, but perhaps they were rude and noisy; however it was not fit to let such a multitude come into a gentleman's house, especially now they were all in sorrow, and therefore he sent them back; and not because he was afraid to let the miracle pass their scrutiny, for he raised Lazarus, and the widow's son, publicly. He took none with him but Peter, and James, and John, that triumvirate of his disciples that he was most intimate with, designing them three, with the parents, to be the only spectators of the miracle, they being a competent number to attest the truth of it. (2.) The check he gave to the mourners; they all wept and bewailed her, for, it seems, she was a very agreeable hopeful child, and dear not only to the parents, but to all the neighbours. But Christ bid them not weep, for she is not dead but sleepeth. He means, as to her peculiar case, that she was not dead for good and all, but that she should now shortly be raised to life, so that it would be to her friends, but as if she had been but a few hours asleep. But it is applicable to all that die in the Lord, therefore we should not sorrow for them, as those that have no hope, because death is but a sleep to them; not only as it is a rest from all the toils of the days of time, but as there will be a resurrection, a waking and rising again to all the glories of the days of eternity. This was a comfortable word, which Christ said to these mourners, yet they wickedly ridiculed it, and laughed him to scorn for it; here was a pearl cast before swine. They were ignorant of the scriptures of the Old Testament, who bantered it as an absurd thing to call death a sleep, yet this good came out of that evil, that hereby the truth of the miracle was evinced, for they knew that she was dead, they were certain of it, and therefore nothing less than a divine power could restore her to life. We find not any answer that he made them, but he soon explained himself, I hope to their conviction, and that they would never again laugh at any word of his. But he put them all out, ver. 54. they were unworthy to be the witnesses of this work of wonder; they who in the midst of their mourning were so merrily disposed, as to laugh at him for what he said, would, it may be, have found something to laugh at, in what he did, and therefore are justly shut out.



Sixthly, Her return to life, after a *short visit* to the *congregation of the dead*, ver. 55. He took her by the hand, as we do by one that we would awake out of sleep, and help up, and he called, saying, *Maid, arise*: Thus the *hand of Christ's grace* goes along with the *calls of his word*, to make them effectual. Here it is expressed what was only implied in the other evangelists, That *her spirit came again*; her soul returned again to animate her body. This plainly proves, that the soul exists and acts in a state of separation from the body, and therefore is immortal; that death doth not extinguish this *candle of the Lord*, but takes it out of a *dark lantern*. It is not, as Grotius well observes, the *κράσις*, or temperament of the body, or any thing that dies with it; but it is *ἀνυπόστατον τι*, something that subsists by itself, which after death is somewhere else than where the body is. Where the soul of this child was in this interval we are not told, it was in the hand of the *Father of spirits*, to whom all souls at death return: When *her spirit came again* she arose, and made it appear she was alive by her motion, as she did also by her appetite, for Christ *commanded to give her meat*. As babes new born, so those that are newly raised, desire spiritual food, that they may grow *thereby*. In the last verse we need not wonder to find *her parents astonished*, but if that implies, that *they only* were so, and not the other by-standers, who had laughed Christ to scorn, we may well wonder at their stupidity, which perhaps was the reason why Christ would not have it proclaimed, as well as to give an instance of his humility.

## C H A P. IX.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The commission Christ gave his twelve apostles to go out for some time to preach the gospel, and confirm it by miracles, ver. 1—6. (2.) Herod's terror at the growing greatness of our Lord Jesus, ver. 7—9. (3.) The apostles return to Christ, his retirement with them into a place of solitude; the great resort of people to them notwithstanding, and his feeding five thousand men, with five loaves and two fishes, ver. 10—17. (4.) His discourse with his disciples concerning himself, and his own sufferings for them, and theirs for him, ver. 18—27. (5.) Christ's transfiguration, ver. 28—36. (6.) The cure of a lunatick child, ver. 37—42. (7.) The repeated notice Christ gave his disciples, of his approaching sufferings, ver. 43—45. (8.) His check to the ambition of his disciples, ver. 46—48. and to their monopolizing of their power over devils to themselves, ver. 49, 50. (9.) The rebuke he gave them for an over-due resentment of an affront given him by a village of the Samaritans, ver. 51—56. (10.) The answers he gave to several that were inclined to follow him, but not considerately, or not zealously, and heartily, so inclined, ver. 57—62.

1. **T**HEN he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. 2. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. 3. And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. 4. And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. 5. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. 6. And they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where. 7. ¶ Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead: 8. And of some, that Elias had appeared: and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. 9. And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.

Here is, 1. The method Christ took to spread his gospel; to diffuse and enforce the light of it. He had travelled about *himself*, preaching and healing, but he could be only in one place at a time; and therefore now he *sent* his twelve disciples abroad, who by this time were pretty well instructed in the nature of the present dispensation, and able to instruct others, and to *deliver to them* what they had *received from the Lord*: Let them disperse themselves some one way, and some another, to *preach the kingdom of God*, as it was now about to be set up by the Messiah; to bring people acquainted with the spiritual nature and tendency of it, and to persuade them to come into the interests and measures of it. And for the confirming of their doctrine, because it was

new and surprizing, and very different from what they had been taught by the scribes and Pharisees, and because so much depended upon mens receiving, or not receiving it, he empowered them to confirm it by miracles, ver. 1, 2. He *gave them authority over all devils*, to dispossess them, and cast them out, though never so numerous, so subtil, so fierce, so obstinate. Christ designed a total rout and ruin to the kingdom of darkness, and therefore gave them power over *all devils*. He authorized and appointed them likewise to *cure diseases*, and to *heal the sick*, which would make them welcome wherever they came; and not only convince peoples judgments, but gain their affections.

This was their commission: Now observe,

1. What Christ directed them to do, in prosecution of this commission at this time, when they were not to go far, or be out long.

1. They must not be solicitous to recommend themselves to peoples esteem by their outward appearance. Now they begin to set up for themselves, they must have no dress, nor study to make any other figure, than what they had made while they followed him; they must *go as they were*, and not change their clothes, or so much as put on a pair of new shoes.

2. They must depend upon providence, and the kindness of their friends, to furnish them with what was convenient for them. They must not take with them *either bread, or money*, and yet believe they should not want. Christ would not have his disciples *shy* of receiving the kindnesses of their friends, but rather to *expect* them: Yet St. Paul saw cause not to go by this rule, when he *laboured with his hands*, rather than be burthensome.

3. They must not *change their lodgings*, as suspecting that those that entertained them, were *weary* of them; they have no reason to be so, for the ark is a guest that always pays well for its entertainment, ver. 4. *Whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide*, that people may know where to find you; that your friends may know you are not backward to *serve* them, and your enemies may know you are not ashamed, or afraid to *face* them, *there abide*, till you *depart* out of that city; stay with those you are used to.

4. They must put on authority, and speak *warning* to those who *refused* them, as well as comfort to those that *received* them, ver. 5. If there be any place that will not entertain you, if the magistrates deny you admission, and threaten to treat you as vagrants, leave them, do not force yourselves upon them, nor run yourselves into danger among them, but at the same time bind them over to the judgment of God for it; *shake off the dust of your feet*, for a *testimony against them*, that will, as it were, be produced in evidence against them, that the messengers of the gospel had been among them, to make them a fair offer of grace and peace, for this dust they left behind there; so that when they perish at last in their infidelity, this will lay and leave their blood upon their own heads. *Shake off the dust of your feet*, as much as to say, you abandon their city, and will have no more to do with them.

2. What they did in prosecution of this commission, ver. 6. They *departed*, though from their Master's presence, yet having still his spiritual presence with them, his *eye* and his *arm* going along with them, and thus born up in their work, they *went through the towns*, some or other of them, all the towns within the circuit appointed them, *preaching the gospel, and healing every where*: Their work was the same with their Master's, doing good both to souls and bodies.

2. Here is Herod's perplexity and vexation at this. The *deriving* of Christ's power, to those who were sent forth in his name, and acted by authority from him, was an *amazing* and *convincing* proof of his being the Messiah, above any thing else; that he could not only work miracles *himself*, but empower others to work miracles too; this spread his fame more than any thing, and made the rays of this *Sun of righteousness* the stronger, by the *reflexion* of them, even from *the earth*, from such mean illiterate men as the apostles were, who had nothing else to recommend them, or to raise any expectations from them, but that *they had been with Jesus*, Acts iv. 13. When the country sees such as those *healing the sick* in the name of Jesus, it gives it an alarm. Now observe,

1. The *various speculations* it raised among the *people*; who though they thought not *rightly*, yet could not but think *honourably* of our Lord Jesus, and that he was an extraordinary person, one come from the other world; that either John Baptist, who was lately persecuted and slain for the cause of God, or *one of the old prophets*, that had been persecuted and slain long since in that cause, was *risen again*, to be recompensed for their sufferings by this honour put upon them. Or that Elias, who was taken alive to heaven in a fiery chariot, *had appeared* as an express from heaven, ver. 7, 8.

2. The *great perplexity* it created in the mind of Herod; when he had heard of all that was done by Christ, his guilty conscience flew in his face, and he was ready to conclude with them that said *John was risen from the dead*. He thought he had got clear of John, and should be never more troubled with him, but, it seems, he is mistaken; either John is come to life again, or here is another in his spirit and power, for God will never leave *himself without witness*. What shall I do now? saith Herod, John



John have I beheaded, but who is this? Is he carrying on John's work, or is he come to avenge John's death? John baptized, but he doth not; *John did no miracle*, but he doth; and therefore appears more formidable than John. Note, Those who oppose God, will find themselves more and more *embarrassed*. However he *desired to see him* whether he resembled John or no; but he might soon have been put out of this pain, if he would but have informed himself of that which thousands knew, that Jesus preached and wrought miracles a great while before John was beheaded, and therefore could not be John raised from the dead. He *desired to see him*, and why did he not go and see him? It is likely, because he thought it *below him* either to go to him, or to send for him; he had enough of John Baptist, and cared not for having to do with any more such reprovers of sin. He desired to see him, but we do not find that ever he did, till he saw him at his bar, and then *he, and his men of war set him at naught*, Luke xxiii. 11. Had he prosecuted his convictions now, and gone to see him, who knows but a happy change might have been wrought in him; but delaying it now, his heart was hardened; and when he did see him, he was as much prejudiced against him as any other.

10. ¶ And the apostles when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place, belonging to the city called Bethsaida. 11. And the people when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. 12. And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place. 13. But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people. 14. For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. 15. And they did so, and made them all sit down. 16. Then he took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. 17. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them, twelve baskets.

Here is, 1. The account which the Twelve gave their Master of the success of their ministry. They were not long out, but *when they returned, they told him all that they had done*, as became servants who were sent on an errand. They told him *what they had done*, that if they had done any thing amiss they might mend it next time.

2. Their retirement for a little breathing. He took them and went aside privately into a desert place, that they might have some relaxation from business, and not be always upon the stretch. Note, He that hath appointed our man-servant and maid-servant to rest, would have his servants to rest too. Those in the most publick stations, and that are most publickly useful, yet must sometimes go aside privately, both for the repose of their bodies to recruit them, and for the furnishing of their minds by meditation for further publick work.

3. The resort of the people to him, and the kind reception he gave them. They followed him, though it were in a desert place; for that is no desert, where Christ is. And though they hereby disturbed the repose he designed here for himself and his disciples, yet he welcomed them, ver. 11. Note, Pious zeal may excuse a little rudeness, it did with Christ, and should with us. Though they came unseasonably, yet Christ gave them what they came for. (1.) He spake unto them of the kingdom of God, the laws of that kingdom with which they must be bound, and the privileges of that kingdom with which they might be blessed. (2.) He healed them that had need of healing, and in a sense of their need made their application to him: Though the disease was never so inveterate, and incurable by the physicians, though the patient were never so poor and mean, yet Christ healed them. There is healing in Christ for all that need it, whether for soul or body. Christ hath still a power over bodily diseases, and heals his people that need healing. Sometimes he sees that we need the sickness for the good of our souls, more than the healing, for the ease of our bodies, and then we must be willing for a season, because there is need to be in heaviness; but when he sees we need healing we shall have it. Death is his servant to heal the saints of all diseases. He heals spiritual maladies by his graces, by his comforts, and has for each what their case calls for; relief for every exigence.

4. The plentiful provision Christ made for the multitude that attended him; with five loaves of bread, and two fishes he fed five thousand men. This story we had twice before, and shall meet

with it again; and it is the only miracle of our Saviour's that is recorded by all the four evangelists.

Let us only observe out of it,

1. That those who diligently attend upon Christ in the way of duty, and therein deny, or expose themselves, or are made to forget themselves, and their outward conveniences by their zeal for God's house, are taken under his particular care, and may depend upon *Jehovah jireh*, the Lord will provide. He will not see those that fear him, and serve him faithfully, want any good thing.

2. That our Lord Jesus was of a free and generous spirit. His disciples said, *Send them away that they may get victuals*; but Christ said, no, *give ye them to eat*; let what we have go as far as it will reach, and they are welcome to it. Thus he has taught both ministers and Christians to use hospitality without grudging, 1 Pet. iv. 9. Those that have but a little, let them do what good they can with that little, and that is the way to make it more. There is that scatters, and yet increases.

3. Jesus Christ has not only physick, but food for all those that by faith apply themselves to him; he not only *heals them that need healing*, cures the diseases of the soul, but feeds them too that need feeding, supports the spiritual life, relieves the necessities of it, and satisfies the desires of it. Christ has provided not only to save the soul from perishing by its diseases, but to nourish the soul unto life eternal, and strengthen it for all spiritual exercises.

4. All the gifts of Christ are to be received by the church in a regular, orderly manner: *Make them sit down by fifties in a company*. The number of each company is taken notice of here, ver. 14. which Christ appointed for the better distribution of the meat, and the easier computation of the number of the guests.

5. When we are receiving our creature-comforts, we must look up to heaven; Christ did so, to teach us to do so. We must acknowledge that we receive them from God, and that we are unworthy to receive them; that we owe them all, and all the comfort we have in them, to the mediation of Christ, by whom the curse is removed, and the covenant of peace settled; that we depend upon God's blessing upon them to make them serviceable to us, and desire that blessing.

6. The blessing of Christ will make a little to go a great way, and the little that the righteous man has, better than the riches of many wicked, a dinner of herbs better than a stalled ox.

7. Those whom Christ feeds, he fills; to whom he gives, he gives enough; as there is in him enough for all, so there is enough for each. He replenishes every hungry soul, abundantly satisfies it with the goodness of his house. Here were fragments taken up, to assure us that in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare. We are not straitened, or stinted in him.

18. ¶ And it came to pass as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? 19. They answering, said, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias: and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again. 20. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering, said, The Christ of God. 21. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing, 22. Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. 23. ¶ And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. 25. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? 26. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. 27. But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

In these verses we have Christ discoursing with his disciples, about the great things that pertained to the kingdom of God; and one circumstance of this discourse is taken notice of here, which we had not in the other evangelists, that Christ was alone praying, and his disciples with him, when he entered into this discourse, ver. 18. Observe, (1.) Though Christ had much publick work to do, yet he found some time to be alone in private, for converse both with himself and with his Father, and with his disciples. (2.) When Christ was alone he was praying. It is good for us to improve our solitudes for devotion, that when we are alone we may not be alone, but may have the Father with us. (3.) When Christ was alone praying, his disciples were with him,



to join with him in his prayer; so that this was a family-prayer. Housekeepers ought to pray with their households, parents with their children, masters with their servants, teachers and tutors with their scholars and pupils. (4.) Christ *prayed* with them before he *examined* them, that they might be directed and encouraged to answer him, by his prayers for them. Those we give instructions to, we should put up prayers for and with. He discoursed with them,

1. Concerning himself: And enquires,

(1.) What the people said of him. *Whom say the people that I am?* Christ knew better than they did, but would have his disciples made sensible by the mistakes of others, concerning him, how happy they were that were led into the knowledge of him, and of the truth concerning him. We should take notice of others ignorances and errors, that we may be the more thankful to him who has *manifested himself to us, and not unto the world*, and may *pity* them, and do what we can to help them, and to teach them better.

They tell him what conjectures concerning him, they had heard in their converse with the common people: And ministers would know the better to suit their instructions, reproofs, and counsels, to the case of ordinary people, if they did but converse more frequently and familiarly with them, they would then be the better able to say what is proper to rectify their notions, and correct their irregularities, and remove their prejudices. The more conversant the physician is with his patient, the better he knows what to do for him. Some said he was John Baptist, who was beheaded but the other day; others Elias, or *one of the old prophets*; any thing but what he was.

(2.) What they said of him. Now see what an advantage you have by your discipleship, you know better things; so we do, faith Peter, thanks be to our Master for it, we know that thou art *the Christ of God*, the *anointed* of God, the Messiah promised. It is matter of unspeakable comfort to us, that our Lord Jesus is *God's anointed*, for then he has an unquestionable authority and ability for his undertaking; for his being *anointed* signifies his being both appointed to it, and qualified for it.

Now one would have expected that Christ should have charged his disciples who were so fully apprized, and assured of this truth, to publish it to every one they met with, no, he *straitly charged them to tell no man that thing*, as yet, because there is a time for all things: after his resurrection which completed the proof of it, Peter made the temple ring of it, that *God has made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ*, Acts ii. 36. But as yet the evidence was not ready to be summed up, and therefore it must be concealed; and while it was so, we may conclude that the believing of it was not necessary to salvation.

2. Concerning his own *sufferings* and *death*, of which he had yet said little. But now his disciples were well established in the belief of his being the Christ, and able to bear it, he speaks of them expressly and with great assurance, *ver. 22.* It comes in as a reason, why they must not yet preach that he was *the Christ*, because the wonders that would attend his death and resurrection, would be the most convincing proof of his being *the Christ of God*. It was by his *exaltation* to the *right hand of the Father*, that he was fully declared to be *the Christ*, and by the sending of the Spirit thereupon, Acts ii. 33. and therefore wait till that is done.

3. Concerning their suffering for him: So far must they be from thinking how to *prevent* his sufferings, that they must rather prepare for their own.

1. We must *accustom* our selves to all instances of *self-denial* and *patience*, *ver. 23.* This is the best preparative for martyrdom: We must live a life of self-denial, and mortification, and contempt of the world; we must not indulge our ease and appetite, for then it will be hard to bear toil and weariness, and want for Christ. We are *daily* subject to affliction, and we must *accommodate* our selves to it, and *acquiesce* in the will of God in it, and must learn to endure hardship. We frequently meet with crosses in the way of duty, though we must not pull them upon our own heads; yet when they are laid for us, we must *take them up*, carry them after Christ, and make the best of them.

2. We must *prefer the salvation and happiness of our souls* before any *secular concern* whatsoever. Reckon upon it, (1.) That he, who to preserve his liberty or estate, his power or preferment, nay, or to save his life, denies Christ and his truths, wilfully wrongs his conscience, and sins against God; will not only be not a *saver*, but an unspeakable *loser* in the issue, when *profit* and *loss* come to be balanced. *He that will save his life upon those terms will lose it*; shall lose that which is of infinitely more value, his precious soul. (2.) We must firmly believe also, that if we lose our lives for cleaving to Christ and our religion, we shall *save* them to our unspeakable advantage; for it shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just, when we shall have it again a new and eternal life. (3.) That the gain of all the world, if we should forsake Christ, and fall in with the interests of the world, would be so far from countervailing the eternal loss and ruin of the soul, that it would bear no manner of proportion to it, *ver. 25.* If we could be supposed to gain all the wealth, honour, and pleasure in the world by denying Christ, yet when by *so doing* we *lose our selves* to all eternity, and are *cast away* at last, what

good will our wordly gain do us? Observe, In Matthew and Mark the dreadful issue is a man's *losing his own soul*, here it is *losing himself*; which plainly intimates that *our souls are our selves*; *Animus cujusque is est quisque*. The soul is the man; and it is well or ill with us, according as it is well or ill with our souls. If they perish for ever under the weight of their own guilt and corruption, it is certain *we* are undone; the body cannot be happy, if the soul be miserable in the other world; but the soul may be happy, though the body be greatly afflicted and oppressed in this world. If a man be himself *cast away*, *ἡ ζημιωθείς*; if he be *damaged*; or if he be punished; *si mulctetur*, if he have a *mulct* put upon his soul by the righteous sentence of Christ, whose cause and interest he has treacherously deserted; if it be adjudged a forfeiture of all his blessedness, and the forfeiture be taken, where is his gain? What is his hope?

3. We must therefore *never be ashamed* of Christ and his gospel, nor of any disgrace or reproach that we may undergo for our faithful adherence to him and it. For, *ver. 26.* *Whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed*, and justly. When the service and honour of Christ, called for his testimony and agency, he denied them, because the interest of Christ was a *despised* interest, and *every where spoken against*; and therefore he can expect no other, but that in the great day, when his case calls for Christ's appearance on his behalf, Christ will be ashamed to own such a cowardly, worldly, sneaking spirit, and will say, he is none of mine, he belongs not to me. As Christ had, so his cause has a state of *humiliation* and of *exaltation*; they, and they only, that are willing to suffer with it, when it suffers, shall reign with it, when it reigns: But those that cannot find in their hearts, to share with it in its *disgrace*, and to say, if this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile, it is certain they shall have no share with it in its *triumphs*. Observe here, how Christ, to support himself and his followers under present disgraces, speaks *magnificently* of the lustre of his second coming, in prospect of which he *endured the cross, despising the shame*. (1.) He shall come in *his own glory*. This was not mentioned in Matthew and Mark. He shall come in the glory of the Mediator, *all that glory* which the Father *restored to him*, which he had with God before the worlds were, which he had *deposited* and *put in pledge* as it were for the accomplishing of his undertaking, and demanded up again, when he had gone through it; Now, O Father, *glorify thou me*, Joh. xvii. 4, 5. He shall come in *all that glory* which the Father *conferred upon him*, when he *set him at his own right hand*, and gave him to be *head over all things to the church*. In all the glory that is due to him, as the assertor of the glory of God, and the author of the glory of all the saints. This is *his own glory*. (2.) He shall come in *his Father's glory*; the Father will judge the world by him, having committed all judgment to him; and therefore will publicly own him in the judgment, as the *brightness of his glory*, and the *express image* of his person. (3.) He shall come in *the glory of the holy angels*; they shall all attend him, and minister to him, and add every thing they can to the lustre of his appearance. What a figure will the blessed Jesus make in that day! Did we believe it, we would never be ashamed of him or his words now.

Lastly, To encourage them in suffering for him, he assures them, that *the kingdom of God* would now *shortly be set up*, notwithstanding the great opposition that was made to it, *ver. 27.* Though the second coming of the Son of man is at a great distance, the kingdom of God shall come in its power in the present age, while some here present are alive. They *saw the kingdom of God* when the Spirit was poured out, when the gospel was preached to all the world, and nations brought to Christ by it; they saw the kingdom of God triumph over the Gentile nations in their *conversion*, and over the Jewish nation in its *destruction*.

28. ¶ And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. 29. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. 30. And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias. 31. Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. 32. But Peter, and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. 33. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. 34. While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. 35. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him. 36. And when the voice



voice was past, Jesus was found alone: and they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

We have here the story of Christ's transfiguration, which was designed for a specimen of that glory of his, in which he will come to judge the world, of which he had lately been speaking, and consequently an encouragement to his disciples to suffer for him, and never to be ashamed of him. We had this story before in Matthew and Mark, and it is well worthy to be repeated to us, and reconsidered by us, for the *confirmation of our faith* in the Lord Jesus, as *the brightness of his Father's glory*, and the light of the world; for the *filling* of our minds with *high and honourable* thoughts of him, notwithstanding his being clothed with a body, and the *giving* of us *some idea* of the glory which he entered into at his *ascension*, and in which he now *appears* within the veil; and the *raising* and *encouraging* of our *hopes* and *expectations* concerning the glory reserved for all believers in the future state.

1. Here is one circumstance of the story, that seems to differ from the other two evangelists that related it. They said it was *six days* after the foregoing sayings, Luke saith it was *about eight days* after, that is, it was that day sevennight; six whole days intervening, and it was the eighth day. Some think it was *in the night* that Christ was transfigured, because the disciples were *sleepy*, as in his agony, and *in the night* his appearance in splendor would be the more illustrious; and if in the night, the computation of the time would be the more doubtful and uncertain; probably in the night, between the seventh and eighth day, and so about eight days.

2. Here are divers circumstances added and explained, which are very material.

1. We are *here* told, that Christ had this honour put upon him when he was *praying*, He *went up into the mountain to pray*, as he frequently did, *ver. 28.* and *as he prayed* he was *transfigured*; when Christ *humbled* himself to pray, he was thus *exalted*. He knew before, that this was designed for him at this time, and therefore seeks it by prayer; Christ himself must *sue out* the favours that were purposed for him and promised to him; *Ask of me, and I will give thee*, Psal. ii. 8. And thus he intended to put an *honour* upon the duty of prayer, and to *recommend* it to us. It is a transfiguring, transforming duty; if our hearts be elevated and enlarged in it, so as in it to *behold the glory of the Lord*, we shall be *changed into the same image, from glory to glory*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. by prayer we fetch in that wisdom and grace and joy, which *makes the face to shine*.

2. Luke doth not use the word *transfigured*, μεταμορφῶν, which Matthew and Mark used, perhaps because it had been used so much in the Pagan theology, but makes use of a phrase equivalent, τὸ εἶδος τῆ προσώπου ἑτέρου, *the fashion of his countenance was another thing from what it had been*; his face shone far beyond what Moses's did when he came down from the mount; and his raiment was *white and glistening*; it was ἐξασπάλων, a word used only here; *bright like lightning*; so that he seemed to be arrayed all with light, to *cover himself with light as with a garment*.

3. It was said in Matthew and Mark, that Moses and Elias appeared to them, here it is said, they *appeared in glory*; to teach us, that saints departed are *in glory*; are in a *glorious* state; they shine in glory; he being in glory, they *appeared with him in glory*, as all the saints shall shortly do.

4. We are here told what was the subject of the discourse between Christ and the two great prophets of the Old Testament, *they spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem*, λέγον τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ — his exodus, his departure; that is, his death. (1.) The death of Christ is here called his *exit*, his *going out*, his *leaving the world*. Moses and Elias spoke of it to him under that notion, to reconcile him to it, and to make the foresight of it the more easy to his human nature. The death of the saints is their exodus, their departure out of Egypt of this world, their release out of a *house of bondage*. Some think the ascension of Christ is included here in his departure, for the departure of Israel out of Egypt was a departure in *triumph*, so was *his*, when he went from earth to heaven. (2.) This departure of his he *must accomplish*, for thus it was determined, the matter was immutably fixed in the counsel of God, and could not be altered. (3.) He must accomplish it at Jerusalem, though his residence was mostly in Galilee; for his most spiteful enemies were at Jerusalem, and there the Sanhedrin sat, that took upon them to judge of prophets. (4.) Moses and Elias spake of this, to intimate, that the *sufferings* of Christ and his *entrance into his glory*, was what Moses and the prophets had *spoken of*; see Luke xxiv. 26, 27. 1 Pet. i. 11. (5.) Our Lord Jesus even in his transfiguration was willing to enter into a discourse concerning his death and sufferings; to teach us, that meditations on death, as it is our departure out of this world to another, are never unseasonable, but in a special manner seasonable when at any time we are *advanced*, lest we should be *lifted up above measure*. In our greatest glories on earth, let us remember, that here *we have no continuing city*.

5. We are here told, which we were not before, that the disciples were *heavy with sleep*, ver. 32. when the vision first began,

No. xc.

Peter, and James, and John were drowsy, and inclined to sleep; either it was late, or they were weary, or had been disturbed in their rest the night before, or perhaps a charming composing air, or some sweet and melodious sounds which disposed them to soft and gentle slumbers, were a preface to the vision; or perhaps it was owing to a sinful carelessness, when Christ was at prayer with them, they did not regard his prayer as they should have done, and to punish them for that, they were left to *sleep on now*, when he began to be *transfigured*, and so slipped an opportunity of seeing how that work of wonder was wrought. These three were now asleep, when Christ was in *his glory*, as afterwards they were, when he was in *his agony*; see the *weakness* and *frailty* of human nature, even in the best, and what need they have of the grace of God. Nothing could be more affecting to these disciples, one would think, than the *glories* and the *agonies* of their Master, and both in the highest degree, and yet neither the one nor the other would serve to *keep them awake*. What need have we to pray to God for quickening grace, to make us not only *alive*, but *lively*. Yet that they might be competent witnesses of *this sign from heaven*, to those that demanded one, after a while they *recovered themselves*; and became perfectly awake; and then they took an exact view of all those glories, so that they were able to give a particular account, as we find one of them doth, of all that passed when they were with Christ *in the holy mount*, 2 Pet. i. 17.

6. It is here observed, that it was when Moses and Elias were now about to *depart*, that Peter said, *Lord, it is good to be here, let us make three tabernacles*; thus many times we are not sensible of the worth of our mercies, till we are about to lose them; nor covet and court their continuance, till they are upon the departure. Peter said this, *not knowing what he said*. Those know not what they say, that talk of making tabernacles on earth for glorified saints in heaven, who have better mansions in the temple there, and long to return to them.

7. It is here added concerning the *cloud* that *overshadowed them*, that they *feared as they entered into the cloud*. The cloud was a token of God's more peculiar presence, it was in a cloud that God of old took possession of the tabernacle and temple, and when the cloud *covered the tabernacle*, *Moses was not able to enter*, Exod. xl. 34, 35. and when it filled the temple, the *priests could not stand to minister by reason of it*, 2 Chron. v. 14. such a cloud was this, and then no wonder the disciples were *afraid to enter into it*. But never let any be afraid to enter into a cloud with Jesus Christ, for he will be sure to bring them safe through it.

8. The *voice* which came from heaven, is here and in Mark related not so fully as in Matthew; *this is my beloved Son, hear him*; though these words, in whom I am well pleased, which we have both in Matthew and Peter, are not expressed, they are implied in that, *this is my beloved Son*; for whom he *loves*, and in whom he is *well pleased*, comes all to one; we are *accepted in the beloved*.

Lastly, The apostles are here said to have kept this vision private, they *told no man in those days*; reserving the discovery of it for another opportunity; when the evidences of Christ's being the Son of God were compleated, in the pouring out of the Spirit, and that doctrine was to be published to all the world. As there is a time to speak, so there is a time to *keep silence*. Every thing is beautiful and useful in its season.

37. ¶ And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. 38. And behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son, for he is mine only child. 39. And lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out, and it teareth him that he someth again, and bruising him, hardly departeth from him. 40. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not. 41. And Jesus answering, said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. 42. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him: and Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

This passage of story in Matthew and Mark follows immediately upon that of Christ's transfiguration, and his discourse with his disciples after it; but here it is said to be *on the next day*, as they were coming down from the hill; which confirms the conjecture, that Christ was transfigured *in the night*, and it should seem, though they did not *make tabernacles* as Peter proposed, yet they found some shelter to repose themselves in all night, for it was not till next day, that they *came down from the hill*; and then he found things in some disorder among his disciples, though not so bad as Moses did when he came down from the mount. When wise and good men are in their beloved retirements, they would do well to consider whether they are not wanted in their *publick stations*.



In this story here, observe,

1. How forward the people were to receive Christ, at his return to them; though he had been but a little while absent, *much people met him*, as at other times *much people followed him*; for so it was foretold concerning him, that *to him should the gathering of the people be*.

2. How importunate the father of the lunatick child was with Christ, for help for him, *ver. 38. I beseech thee, look upon my son*, that is his request, and it is a very modest one; one compassionate look from Christ is enough to set every thing to rights. Let us bring ourselves and our children to Christ to be *looked upon*. His plea is, he is *mine only child*; they that have many children, may balance their affliction in one, with their comfort in the rest; yet if it be an only child that is a grief, the affliction in that may be balanced with the love of God, in giving his only begotten Son for us.

3. How deplorable the case of the child was, *ver. 39. He was under the power of an evil spirit, that took him*, and diseases of that nature are more frightful, than such as arise meerly from natural causes; when the fit seized him, without any warning given, he suddenly *cried out*, and many a time his shrieks had pierced the heart of his tender father. This malicious spirit *tore him*, and *bruised him*, and *departed not from him*, but with great difficulty, and a deadly gripe at parting. O the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! and what mischief doth Satan do, where he gets possession. But happy they that have access to Christ!

4. How defective the disciples were in their faith. Though Christ had given them *power over unclean spirits*, yet they *could not cast out this evil spirit*, *ver. 40. Either they distrusted the power they were to fetch in strength from, or the commission given to them, or did not exert themselves in prayer as they ought, for this Christ reproved them. O faithless and perverse generation. Dr. Clarke understands this as spoken to his disciples; "Will ye be yet so faithless and full of distrust, that ye cannot execute the commission I have given you?"*

5. How effectual the cure was which Christ wrought upon this child, *ver. 42. Christ can do that for us, which his disciples cannot. Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit*, then when he raged most. The devil *threw the child down and tore him*, distorted him, so as if he would have pulled him to pieces. But one word from Christ *healed the child*, and made good the damage the devil had done him. And it is here added, that he *delivered him again to his father*. Note, When our children are recovered from sickness, we must receive them as delivered to us again, receive them as life from the dead, and as when we first received them. It is comfortable to receive them from the hand of Christ, to see him delivering them to us again, here take this child and be thankful; take it, and bring it up for me, for thou hast it again from me. Take it, and do not set thy heart too much upon it. With such cautions as these, parents should receive their children *from Christ's hands*, and then with comfort put them again *into his hands*.

43. ¶ And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God: But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, 44. Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. 45. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying. 46. ¶ Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. 47. And Jesus perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, 48. And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great. 49. ¶ And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. 50. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us, is for us.

We may observe here,

1. The impression which Christ's miracles made upon all that beheld them, *ver. 43. They were all amazed at the mighty power of God*, which they could not but see in all the miracles Christ wrought. Note, The works of God's almighty power are amazing, especially those that were wrought by the hand of the Lord Jesus; for he is *the power of God*, and his name is *Wonderful*. Their wonder was universal, they wondered *every one*; and so were the causes of it, they wondered at *all things which Jesus did*, all his actions had something uncommon and surprizing in them.

2. The notice Christ gave to his disciples of his approaching sufferings; *the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men*, wicked men, men of the worst character; they shall be permitted to abuse him at their pleasure. That is here *implied* which is

expressed by the other evangelists, *they shall kill him*. But that which is peculiar here is, (1.) The connexion of this with what goes next before, of the admiration with which the people were struck, at beholding of Christ's miracles, *ver. 43. while they all wondered at all things which Jesus did, he said this to his disciples*. They had a fond conceit of his temporal kingdom, and that he should reign and they with him, in secular pomp and power; and now they thought this *mighty power* of his, would easily effect the thing, and his interest gained by his miracles in the people, would contribute to it; and therefore Christ, who knew what was in their hearts, takes this occasion to tell them again, what he had told them before, that he was so far from having men *delivered into his hands*, that he must be *delivered into the hands of men*; so far from living in honour, that he must die in disgrace; and all his miracles and the interest he has by them gained in the hearts of the people, will not be able to prevent it.

(2.) The solemn preface with which it is introduced; *let these sayings sink down into your ears*; i. e. take special notice of what I say, and mix faith with it; let not the notions you have of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, stop your ears against it, nor make you unwilling to believe it. Admit what I say, and submit to it. *Let it sink down into your hearts*; so the Syriac and Arabick read it: the word of Christ doth us no good, unless we let it sink down into our heads and hearts. (3.) The unaccountable stupidity of the disciples, with reference to this prediction of Christ's sufferings. It was said in Mark, *they understood not that saying*, it was plain enough, but they *would not understand it in the literal sense*, because it agreed not with their notions; and they *could not understand it in any other, and were afraid to ask him*, lest they should be undeceived and awaked out of their pleasing dream; but it is here added, that *it was hid from them, that they perceived it not*, through the weakness of faith and the power of prejudice. We cannot think it was *in mercy* hid from them, lest they should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow at the prospect of it; but that it was a paradox, because they *made it so* to themselves.

3. The rebuke Christ gave to his disciples, for their disputing among themselves which should be greatest, *ver. 46—48*. This passage we had before, and, the more is the pity, shall meet with the like again. Observe here,

(1.) That ambition of honour, and strife for superiority and precedency, is a sin that doth most easily beset the disciples of our Lord Jesus, for which they deserve to be severely rebuked, and it flows from corruptions, which they are highly concerned to subdue and mortify, *ver. 46*. They that expect to be *great* in this world, commonly aim high, and nothing will serve them short of being *greatest*; which exposeth them to a great deal of temptation and trouble, which they are safe from that are content to be *little*, to be *least*, to be *less than the least*.

(2.) That Jesus Christ is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts and intents of our hearts, *ver. 47. he perceived their thoughts*; they are *words* to him, and *whispers* loud cries. It is a good reason why we should keep up a strict government of our thoughts, because Christ takes a strict cognizance of them.

(3.) That Christ will have his disciples to aim at that honour that is to be obtained by a quiet and condescending humility, and not at that which is to be obtained by a restless and aspiring ambition. Christ *took a child, and set him by him*, *ver. 47*. for he always expressed a tenderness and kindness for little children; and he proposed *this child* to them for an example; (1.) Let them be of the *temper* of this child, *humble*, and *quiet*, and *easy* to itself; let them not affect worldly pomp or grandeur, or high titles, but be as dead to them as this child, let them bear no more malice to their rivals and competitors, than this child did. Let them be willing to be *the least*, if that would contribute any thing to their usefulness, to stoop to the meanest office, whereby they might *do good*. (2.) Let them assure themselves, that this was the way to preferment; for this would recommend them to the esteem of their brethren, they that loved Christ, would therefore *receive them in his name*, because they did most resemble him; and they would likewise recommend themselves to his favour, for Christ would take the kindnesses done to them, as done to himself. *Whosoever shall receive one such child*, a preacher of the gospel, that is of such a disposition as this, he placeth his respects aright, and *receiveth me*; and *whosoever receiveth me* in such a minister, *receives him that sent me*: and what greater honour can any man attain to in this world, than to be received by men as a messenger of God and Christ, and to have God and Christ own themselves received and welcomed in him; this honour have all the humble disciples of Jesus Christ, and thus they shall be truly great that are least among them.

4. The rebuke Christ gave to his disciples for discouraging one that honoured him, and served him, but was not of their communion, not only not one of the twelve, or one of the seventy, but not one of those that ever associate with them, or attend on them; but upon occasional hearing of Christ believed in him, and made use of his name with faith and prayer in a serious manner, for the casting out of devils. Now (1.) This man they *rebuked and restrained*; they would not let him pray and preach, though it was to the honour of Christ, though it did good to men, and weakened Satan's kingdom, because he did *not follow* Christ



*Christ with them*; he separated from their church, was not ordained as they were, paid them no respect, nor gave them the right hand of fellowship. Now if ever any society of Christians in this world, had reason to silence those that were not of their communion, the twelve disciples at this time had; and yet, (2.) Jesus Christ chid them for what they did, and warned them not to do the like again, nor any that profess to be the successors of the apostles, *Forbid him not*, ver. 50. but rather encourage him, for he is carrying on the same design that you are, though for reasons best known to himself, he doth not follow *with you*; and he will meet you in *the same end*, though he do not accompany you in *the same way*. You do well to do, as you do, but it doth not therefore follow that he doth ill to do as he doth, and that you do well to put him under an interdict, for *he that is not against us, is for us*, and therefore ought to be countenanced by us. We need not lose any of our friends, while we have so few, and so many enemies. Those may be found faithful followers of Christ, and as such may be accepted of him, though they do not follow *with us*. See *Mark*. ix. 38, 39. O what a great deal of mischief to the church, even from those that boast of relation to Christ, and pretend to *envy for his sake*, would be prevented, if this passage of story were but duly considered!

51. ¶ And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, 52. And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him. 53. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. 54. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did? 55. But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 56. For the Son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village.

This passage of story we have not in any other of the evangelists, and it seems to come in here, for the sake of its affinity with that next before, for in this also Christ rebuked his disciples, because they envied for his sake; there under colour of zeal for Christ, they were for silencing and restraining separatists, here under the same colour they were for putting infidels to death, and as for *that*, so for *this* also, Christ reprimanded them; for a spirit of bigotry and persecution, is directly contrary to the spirit of Christ and Christianity.

Observe here,

1. The *readiness* and *resolution* of our Lord Jesus, in prosecuting his great undertaking, for our redemption and salvation. Of this we have an instance, ver. 51. *When the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*. Observe, (1.) There was a time fixed for the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus, and he knew well enough when it was, and had a clear and certain foresight of it, and yet was so far from keeping out of the way, that then he appeared most publicly of all, and was most busy, knowing that his time was short. (2.) When he saw his death and sufferings approaching, he looked through them, and beyond them, to the glory that should follow; he looked upon it as the time when he should be *received up into glory*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. received up into the highest heavens to be enthroned there. Moses and Elias spoke of his death at his departure out of this world, which made it not *formidable*, but he went further, and looked upon it as his translation to a better world, which made it very *desirable*. All good Christians may frame to themselves the same notion of death, and may call it their being *received up*, to be with Christ where he is; and when the time of their being *received up* is at hand, let them lift up their heads, knowing that *their redemption draws nigh*. (3.) On this prospect of the joy set before him, he *stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*, the place where he was to suffer and die. He was fully determined to go, and would not be dissuaded; he went *directly* to Jerusalem, because there now his business lay, and he did not go about to other towns, or fetch a compass, which if he had done, as commonly he did, he might have avoided going through Samaria. He went cheerfully and courageously thither, though he knew the things which should befall him there. He did not fail or was discouraged, but set his face as a flint, knowing that he should be not only justified but glorified, *Isa*. l. 7. not only not run down, but received up. How should this shame us for, and shame us out of, our backwardness to do and suffer for Christ; we draw back, and turn our faces another way from his service, who stedfastly set his face against all opposition, to go through with the work of our salvation.

2. The *rudeness* of the Samaritans in a certain village, not named nor deserving to be so, who would not receive him, nor suffer him to bait in their town, though his way lay through it.

Observe here, (1.) How *civil* he was to them. *He sent messengers before his face*, some of his disciples, that went to take up lodgings, and to know whether he might have leave to accommodate himself and his company among them; for he would not come to *give offence*; or if they took any umbrage at the number of his followers. He sent some to *make ready* for him, not for state, but convenience, and that his coming might be no surprize. (2.) How *uncivil* they were to him, ver. 53. they did not receive him, would not suffer him to come into their village, but ordered their watch to keep him out: He would have paid for all he *bestrode*, and been a generous guest among them, would have done them good, and preached the gospel to them, as he had done some time ago to another city of the Samaritans, *Joh*. iv. 41. He would have been, if they pleased, the greatest blessing that ever came to their village, and yet they forbid him entrance. Such treatment his gospel and ministers have often met with. Now the reason was *because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem*, they observed by his motions, that he was steering his course that way. The great controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans, was about the place of worship, whether Jerusalem or mount Gerizim near Sychar; see *Joh*. iv. 20. And so hot was the controversy between them, that the *Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans*, nor they with them, *Joh*. iv. 9. Yet we may suppose they did not deny other Jews lodgings among them, no not when they went up to the feasts, for if that had been their constant practice, Christ would not have attempted it; and it would have been a great way about, for some of the Galileans to go to Jerusalem any other way, but through Samaria. But they were particularly incensed against Christ, who was a celebrated teacher, for owning and adhering to the temple at Jerusalem, when the priests of that temple were such bitter enemies to him, which they hoped would have driven him to come and worship at *their* temple, and bring that into reputation; but when they saw he would go forward to Jerusalem, notwithstanding this, they would not shew him the common civility, which probably they used formerly to shew him, in his journey thither.

3. The *resentment* which James and John had of this affront, ver. 54. When these two heard this message brought, they were all in a flame presently, and nothing will serve them but Sodom's doom upon this village; Lord, say they, give us leave to command fire to come down from heaven, not to *frighten* them only, but to *consume* them. Here indeed they showed, (1.) A great confidence in the power they had received from Jesus Christ; though this had not been particularly mentioned in their commission, yet they could with a word's speaking fetch *fire from heaven*. *Θέλεις εἰπῶμεν*, wilt thou that we *speak the word*, and the thing will be done. (2.) A great zeal for the honour of their Master; they took it very heinously, that he who did good wherever he came, and found hearty welcome, should be denied the liberty of the road by a parcel of paltry Samaritans; they could not think of it without indignation, that their Master should be thus slighted. (3.) A submission notwithstanding, to their Master's good will and pleasure; they will not offer to do such a thing, unless Christ give leave; *Wilt thou that we do it?* (4.) A regard to the examples of the prophets that were before them; it is doing *as Elias did*; they would not have thought of such a thing, if Elijah had not done it upon the soldiers that came to take him, once and again, 2 *King*. i. 10, 12. They thought this *precedent* would be their warrant; so apt are we to misapply the examples of good men, and to think to justify ourselves by them in the irregular liberties we give ourselves, when the case is not parallel.

But though there was something well in what they said, yet there was much more amiss. (1.) This was not the first time, by a great many, that our Lord Jesus had been in like manner affronted, witness the Nazarenes thrusting him out of their city, and the Gadarenes desiring him to depart out of their coast, and yet he never called for any judgment upon them, but patiently put up the injury. (2.) These were Samaritans, from whom better was not to be expected, and perhaps they had heard that Christ had forbidden his disciples to *enter into any of the cities of the Samaritans*, *Matt*. x. 5. and therefore it was not so bad in them as in others, that knew more of Christ, and had received so many favours from him. (3.) Perhaps it was only some few of the town, that knew any thing of the matter, or that sent that rude message to him, while for ought they knew, there were many in the town, who, if they had heard of Christ's being so near them, would have gone to meet him, and welcomed him; and must the whole town be laid in ashes for the wickedness of a few? Will they have the righteous destroyed with the wicked? (4.) Their Master had never yet upon any occasion called for *fire from heaven*, nay, he had refused to give the Pharisees any *sign from heaven*, when they demanded it, *Matt*. xvi. 1, 2. and why should they think to introduce it. James and John were the two disciples whom Christ had called Boanerges, *sons of thunder*, *Mark* iii. 17. and will not that serve them, but they must be *sons of lightning* too? (5.) The example of Elias did not reach the case. Elijah was sent to display the terrors of the law, and to give proof of that, and to witness as a bold reprover against the idolatries and wickednesses of the court of Ahab, and it was agreeable



agreeable enough to him to have his commission thus proved, but it is a dispensation of grace that is now to be introduced, to which such a terrible display of divine justice will not be at all agreeable. Archbishop Tillotson suggests, that their being now near Samaria, where Elijah called for fire from heaven, that might help to put it in their heads; perhaps at the very place; but though the place was the same, the times were altered.

4. The *reproof* he gave to James and John for their fiery, furious zeal, *ver. 55.* He turned with a just displeasure, *ver. 55.* and rebuked them, for as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens, particularly for what they do that is irregular and unbecoming them, under colour of zeal for him.

1. He shews them in particular their mistake. *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of;* that is, (1.) *Ye are not aware what an evil spirit and disposition you are of;* how much there is of pride and passion, and personal revenge covered under this pretence of zeal for your Master. Note, There may be much corruption lurking, nay, and stirring too in the hearts of good people, and they themselves not be sensible of it. (2.) *Ye do not consider what a good spirit, directly contrary to this, ye should be of.* Surely you are yet to learn, though you have been so long learning, what the spirit of Christ, and Christianity is: Have you not been taught to *love your enemies*, and to *bless them that curse you*, and to call for grace from heaven, not fire from heaven, upon them? You know not how contrary your disposition herein is, to that which it was the design of the gospel you should be delivered into. You are not now under the dispensation of bondage, and terror, and death, but under the dispensation of love, and liberty, and grace, which was ushered in with a proclamation of *peace on earth*, and *good will towards men*, to which you ought to accommodate your selves, and not by such imprecations as these oppose your selves.

2. He shews them the general design and tendency of his religion, *ver. 56.* *The Son of man* is not himself come, and therefore doth not send you abroad, *to destroy mens lives but to save them.* He designed to propagate his holy religion by love and sweetness, and every thing that is inviting and endearing, not by fire and sword, and blood and slaughter; by miracles of healing, not by plagues and miracles of destruction, as Israel was brought out of Egypt. Christ came to *slay all enmities*, not to foster them. Those are certainly destitute of the spirit of the gospel, that are for anathematizing and rooting out by violence and persecution all that are not of their mind and way, that cannot in conscience say as they say, and do as they do. Christ came not only to save mens *souls*, but to save their *lives* too, witness the many miracles he wrought for the healing of diseases that would otherwise have been mortal. By which, and a thousand other instances of beneficence, it appears that Christ would have his disciples do good to all, to the utmost of their power, but hurt to none; to draw men into his church with the *corde of a man*, and the *bands of love*, but not think to drive men into it with a *rod of violence*, or the *scourge of the tongue*.

5. His retreat from this village; Christ would not only not punish them for their rudeness, but would not insist upon his right of travelling the road, which was as free to him as to other his neighbours, would not attempt to force his way, but quietly and peaceably went to another village, where they were not so stingy and bigotted, and there refreshed himself and went on his way. Note, When a stream of opposition is strong, it is wisdom to get out of the way of it; rather than to contend with it. If some be very rude, instead of revenging it, we should try whether others will not be more civil.

57. ¶ And it came to pass that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 59. And he said unto another, Follow me: But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. 61. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee: but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. 62. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

We have here an account of three several persons that offered themselves to follow Christ, and the answers that Christ gave to each of them: The two former we had an account of, *Matt. xix. 21.*

First. Here is one that is extremely forward to follow Christ immediately, but seems to have been too rash, and hasty, and inconsiderate, and not to have sitten down, and counted the cost.

1. He makes Christ a very large promise, *ver. 57.* *As they went in the way;* going up to Jerusalem, where it was expected Christ would first appear in his glory; one said to him, *Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;* this must be the resolution of all that will be found Christ's disciples indeed; they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, *Rev. xiv. 4.* though it be through fire and water, to prisons and deaths.

2. Christ gives him a necessary caution, not to promise himself great things in the world, in following him; but on the contrary, to count upon poverty and meanness, for the Son of man has not where to lay his head.

We may look upon this, (1.) As setting forth the very low condition that our Lord Jesus was in, in this world. He not only wanted the delights and ornaments that great princes use to have, but even such accommodations for meer necessity, as the foxes have, and the birds of the air. See what a depth of poverty our Lord Jesus submitted to for us, to increase the worth and merit of his satisfaction, and to purchase for us a larger allowance of grace, that we through his poverty might be rich, *2 Cor. viii. 9.* He that made all, did not make a dwelling-place for himself, not a house of his own to put his head in, but what he was beholden to others for. He here calls himself the Son of man, a son of Adam, partaker of flesh and blood. He glories in his condescension towards us, not only to the meanness of our nature, but to the meanest condition in that nature, to testify his love to us, and to teach us a holy contempt of the world, and of great things in it; and a continual regard to another world. Christ was thus poor, to sanctify and sweeten poverty to his people; the apostles had no certain dwelling-place, *1 Cor. iv. 11.* which they might the better bear, when they knew their Master had not, allud. *2 Sam. xi. 11.* we may well be content to fare as Christ did. (2.) As proposing this to the consideration of those who intend to be his disciples. If we mean to follow Christ, we must lay aside the thoughts of great things in the world, and not reckon upon making any thing more than heaven of our religion, as we must resolve not to take up with any thing less. Let us not go about to compound the profession of Christianity, with secular advantages; Christ has put them asunder, let not us think of joining them together; on the contrary, we must expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations, must deny ourselves and take up our crosses. Christ tells this man what he must count upon if he followed him, to lie cold and uneasy, to fare hard, and live in contempt; if he could not submit to that, let him not pretend to follow Christ. This word sent him back, for ought appears, but it will be no discouragement to any, that know what there is in Christ and heaven to set in the scale against this.

Secondly, Here is another that seems resolved to follow Christ, but he begs day, *ver. 59.* To this man Christ first gave the call, he said to him, *follow me.* He that proposed the thing of himself, fled off when he heard of the difficulties that attended it; but this man to whom Christ gave a call, though he hesitated at first, yet, as it should seem, afterwards yielded; so true was that of Christ, *you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,* *Joh. xv. 16.* It is not of him that willeth, and of him that runneth, as that forward spark in the foregoing verses, but of God that sheweth mercy, that gives the call, and makes it effectual, as to this man here. Observe,

1. The excuse he made; *Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.* I have an aged father at home, who cannot live long, and will need me while he doth live; let me go and attend on him, until he is dead, and I have performed my last office of love to him, and then I will do any thing. We may here see three temptations, by which we are in danger of being drawn and kept from following Christ; which therefore we should guard against. (1.) We are tempted to rest in a discipleship at large, in which we may be at a loose end, and not to come close, and give up ourselves to be strict and constant. (2.) We are tempted to defer the doing of that which we know to be our duty, and to put it off to some other time: When we have got clear of such a care and difficulty, when we have dispatched such a business, raised an estate to such a pitch, then we will begin to think of being religious; and so we are cozened of all our time, by being cozened of the present time. (3.) We are tempted to think, that our duty to our relations will excuse us from our duty to Christ; it is a plausible excuse indeed, let me go bury my father, let me take care of my family, and provide for my children, and then I will think of serving Christ; whereas the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, must be fought and minded in the first place.

2. Christ's answer to it, *ver. 60.* *Let the dead bury their dead.* Suppose (which is not likely) that there were none but the dead to bury their dead, or none but those that are themselves aged and dying, who are as good as dead, and fit for no other service, yet thou hast other work to do: *Go thou and preach the kingdom of God.* Not that Christ would have his followers or his ministers to be unnatural, our religion teaches us to be kind and good in every relation, to shew piety at home, and to requite our parents: But we must not make these offices an excuse from our duty to God. If the nearest and dearest relation we have in the world, stand in our way to keep us from Christ, it is necessary we have



have a zeal that will make us forget *father and mother*, as Levi did, *Deut. xxxiii. 9.* This disciple was called to be a minister, and therefore must not *entangle himself with the affairs of this world*, *2 Tim. ii. 4.* And it is a rule, That whenever Christ calls to any duty, we must not *consult with flesh and blood*, *Gal. i. 15, 16.* No excuses must be admitted against a present obedience to the call of Christ.

Thirdly, Here is another that is willing to follow Christ, but he must have a *little time to talk with his friends* about it.

Observe,

1. His request for a dispensation, *ver. 61.* He said, *Lord, I will follow thee*, I design no other, I am determined to do it, but *let me first go bid them farewell that are at home.* This seemed reasonable, it was what Elisha desired when Elijah called him, *Let me kiss my father and my mother*; and it was allowed him: But the ministry of the gospel is *preferable*, and the service of it more urgent than that of the prophets, and therefore here it would not be allowed. Suffer me *ἀποτάξαι τοῖς εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου*, let me go and *set in order my household affairs*, and give direction concerning them: So some understand it. Now that which was amiss in this is, (1.) That he looked upon his following Christ as a melancholy, troublesome, dangerous thing, it was to him as if he were *going to die*, and therefore he must take *dear leave* of all his friends, never to *see them again*, or never *with any comfort*; whereas, in following Christ, he might be more a comfort and blessing to them, than if he had continued with them. (2.) That he seemed to have his worldly concerns more upon his heart than he ought to have, and than would consist with a close attendance to his duty, as a follower of Christ. He seemed to hanker after his relations, and family concerns, and he could not part easily and cleverly from them, but they stuck to him. It may be he had bidden them *farewel* once, but *loth to depart bids oft farewell*, and therefore he must bid them *farewel* once more, for they are *at home, at my house.* (3.) That he was willing to enter into a temptation, from his purpose of following Christ. To go bid them *farewel*, that were *at home, at his house*, would be to expose himself to the strongest solicitations imaginable, to alter his resolution, for they would all be against it, and would *beg and pray* that he would not *leave them*, now it was presumption in him, to thrust himself into such a temptation. Those that resolve to walk with their Maker, and follow their Redeemer, must resolve that they will not so much as *parley* with their tempter.

2. The rebuke which Christ gave him for this request, *ver. 62.* *No man having put his hand to the plough*, and designing to make good work of his ploughing, will *look back*, or look behind him, for then he makes balks with his plough, and the ground he plows is *not fit* to be sown; so thou, if thou hast designed to follow me, and to reap the advantages of those that do so, if thou *lookest back* to a worldly life again, and hankereft after that; if thou *lookest back* as Lot's wife did to Sodom, which seems to be alluded to here, *thou art not fit for the kingdom of God.* (1.) Thou art not *soil fit* to receive the *good seed* of the kingdom of God, if thou art thus *plowed* by the *halves*, and not gone through with. (2.) Thou art not a *sower fit* to scatter the good seed of the kingdom, if thou canst *hold the plough* no better. Plowing is in order to sowing. As those are not fit to be *sown* with divine comforts, whose *fallow ground* is not first *broken up*; so those are not fit to be employed in sowing, that know not how to break up the fallow ground; but when they have *laid their hand to the plough*, upon every occasion look back, and think of quitting it. Note, Those who begin with the work of God, must resolve to *go on* with it, or they will make nothing of it. Looking back inclines to *drawing back*, and *drawing back* is to *perdition*. Those are not fit for heaven, who having set their faces heavenward, face about. But he, and he only, that *endures to the end* shall be *saved*.

## CHAP. X.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The ample commission which Christ gave to the seventy disciples to preach the gospel, and to confirm it by miracles; and the full instructions he gave them, how to manage themselves, in the execution of their commissions, and great encouragements therein, *ver. 1—16.* (2.) The reports which the seventy disciples made to their Master, of the success of their negotiation, and his discourse thereupon, *ver. 17—24.* (3.) Christ's discourse with a lawyer concerning the way to heaven, and the instructions Christ gave him by a parable, to look upon every one as his neighbour, whom he had occasion to shew kindness to, or receive kindness from, *ver. 25—37.* (4.) Christ's entertainment at Martha's house, the reproof he gave to her for her care about the world, and his commendation of Mary, for her care about her soul, *ver. 38—42.*

1. AFTER these things, the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city, and place, whither he himself would come. *No. xc.*

self would come. 2. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. 3. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. 4. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. 5. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. 6. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. 7. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. 8. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. 9. And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 10. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, 11. Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 12. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. 13. Wo unto thee Chorazin, wo unto thee Bethsaida: for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. 15. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. 16. He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.

We have here the sending forth of seventy disciples two and two, into divers parts of the country, to preach the gospel, and to work miracles in those places which Christ himself designed to visit, to make way for his entertainment. This is not taken notice of by the other evangelists; but the instructions here given them, are much the same with those given to the twelve. Observe,

1. Their number: They were seventy. As in the choice of twelve apostles, Christ had an eye to the twelve patriarchs, the twelve tribes, and the twelve princes of those tribes, so here he seems to have an eye to the *seventy* elders of Israel. So many went up with Moses and Aaron to the mount, and *saw the glory of the God of Israel*, *Exod. xxiv. 1, 9.* And so many were afterwards chosen to be assisting to Moses in the government, in order to which, the Spirit of prophecy came upon them, *Numb. xi. 24, 25.* The *twelve wells of water*, and the *seventy palm-trees* that were at Elim, were a figure of the *twelve apostles*, and the *seventy disciples*, *Exod. xv. 27.* They were seventy elders of the Jews, that were employed by Ptolemy, king of Egypt, in turning the Old Testament into Greek, whose translation is thence called the *Septuagint*. The great Sanhedrin consisted of this number. Now,

(1.) We are glad to find that Christ had so many followers, fit to be sent forth; his labour was not altogether in vain, tho' he met with much opposition. Note, Christ's interest is a *growing* interest, and his followers, like Israel in Egypt, tho' *afflicted* shall *multiply*. These *seventy*, though they did not attend him so closely and constantly as the *twelve* did, yet they were the constant hearers of his doctrine, and witnesses of his miracles, and believed in him. Those three mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter, might have been of these seventy, if they would have applied themselves in good earnest to their business. These seventy were those whom Peter speaks of, as *the men which accompanied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us*, and were part of the one hundred and twenty there spoken of, *Acts i. 15, 21.* Many of those, that were the companions of the apostles, whom we read of in the Acts and the Epistles, we may suppose, were of these seventy disciples.

(2.) We are glad to find there was work for so many ministers; hearers for so many preachers: Thus the grain of mustard-seed began to *grow*, and the favour of the leaven to diffuse itself in the meal, in order to the leavening of the whole.

2. Their work and business. He sent them *two and two*, that they might strengthen and encourage one another, *If one fall, the other will help to raise him up.* He sent them, not to all the cities of Israel, as he did the *twelve*, but only to *every city and place whither he himself would come*, *ver. 1.* as his harbingers; and we must suppose, though it be not recorded, that Christ did soon after come to all those places whither he now sent them, though he could stay



stay but a little while in a place. Two things they were ordered to do, the same that Christ did wherever he came, (1.) They must *heal the sick*, ver. 9. heal them in the name of Jesus, which would make people to long to see that Jesus, and ready to entertain him, whose name was so powerful. (2.) They must publish the approach of the kingdom of God, its approach to them; tell them this, *The kingdom of God is come nigh to you*, and you now stand fair for an admission into it, if you will but look about you. Now is the day of your visitation, know and understand it. It is good to be made sensible of our advantages, and opportunities, that we may lay hold on them. When the kingdom of God comes nigh us, it concerns us to go forth to meet it.

3. The instructions he gives them.

1. They must set out with prayer, ver. 2. and in prayer, (1.) They must be duly affected with the necessities of the souls of men, which called for their help. They must *look about*, and see how great the harvest was, what abundance of people there were that wanted to have the gospel preached to them, and were willing to receive it; nay, that had at this time their expectations raised, of the coming of the Messiah, and of his kingdom. There was corn ready to shed and be lost, for want of hands to gather it in. Note, Ministers should apply themselves to their work under a deep concern for precious souls, looking upon them as the riches of this world, which ought to be secured for Christ. They must likewise be concerned that the labourers were so few. The Jewish teachers were indeed many, but they were not labourers; they did not gather in souls to God's kingdom, but to their own interest and party. Note, Those that are good ministers themselves, with there were more good ministers, for there is work for more. It is common for tradesmen not to care how few there are of their own trade; but Christ would have the labourers in his vineyard reckon it a matter of complaint, when the labourers are few.

(2.) They must earnestly desire to receive their mission from God; that he would send them forth, as labourers into his harvest, who is the Lord of the harvest; and that he would send others forth; for if God send them forth, they may hope he will go along with them, and give them success. Let them therefore say, as the prophet, *Isa. vi. 8. Here I am, send me*. It is desirable to receive our commission from God, and then we may go on boldly.

2. They must set out with an expectation of trouble and persecution, *Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves*, but go your ways, and resolve to make the best of it. Your enemies will be as wolves, bloody and cruel, and ready to pull you to pieces; in their threatnings and revilings, they will be as howling wolves to terrify you, in their persecutions of you, they will be as ravening wolves to tear you. But you must be as lambs, peaceable and patient, though made an easy prey of. It would have been very hard thus to be sent forth, as sheep among wolves, if he had not endued them with his spirit and courage.

3. They must not encumber themselves with a load of provisions, as if they were going a long voyage, but depend upon God and their friends, to provide what was convenient for them; carry neither a purse for money, nor a scrip or knapsack for clothes or victuals, nor new shoes, as before to the twelve, chap. ix. 3. and salute no man by the way: This command Elisha gave to his servant, when he sent him to see the Shunamite's dead child, 2 Kings iv. 29. Not that Christ would have his ministers to be rude, and morose, and unmannered; but (1.) They must go as men in haste, that had their particular places assigned them, where they must deliver their message, and in their way directly to those places, must not hinder or retard themselves with needless ceremonies or compliments. (2.) They must go as men of business, business that relates to another world, which they must be intent in, and intent upon, and therefore must not entangle themselves with conversation about secular affairs. Minister verbi es, hoc age. (3.) They must go as serious men, and men in sorrow; it was the custom of mourners, in the seven first days of their mourning, not to salute any, Job ii. 13. Christ was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and it was fit, that by this and other signs, his messengers should resemble him, and likewise shew themselves affected with the calamities of mankind, which they came to relieve, and touched with a feeling of them.

4. They must shew not only their good-will, but God's good-will, to all to whom they came, and leave the issue and success to him that knows the heart, ver. 5, 6.

1. The charge given them was, *Whatsoever house they entered into, they must say, Peace be to this house*. Here (1.) They are supposed to enter into private houses, for being not admitted into the synagogues, they were forced to preach where they could have liberty. And as their publick preaching was driven into houses, so thither they carried it: Like their Master, wherever they visited, they preached, from house to house, Acts v. 42. —xx. 20. Christ's church was at first very much a church in the house. (2.) They are instructed to say, *Peace be to this house*, to all under this roof, to this family, and all that belong to it. *Peace be to you*, was the common form of salutation among the Jews, they must not use it in formality, according to custom, to those they meet on the way, because they must use it with solemnity; to those whose houses they entered into; salute no man by

the way in compliment, but those into whose house ye enter, say to them, *Peace be to you*, with seriousness, and in reality; for this is intended to be more than a compliment. Christ's ministers go into all the world, to say, in Christ's name, *Peace be unto you*. (1.) We are to propose peace to all; to preach peace by Jesus Christ, to proclaim the gospel of peace, the covenant of peace, peace on earth, and to invite the children of men to come and take the benefit of it. (2.) We are to pray for peace to all. We must earnestly desire the salvation of the souls of those we preach to, and offer up those desires to God in prayer, and it may be well to let them know we do thus pray for them, and bless them, in the name of the Lord.

2. The success was different, according to the different disposition of those they preached to, and prayed for. According as the inhabitants are, sons of peace or not, accordingly our peace will, or will not, rest upon the house; *recipitur ad modum recipientis*. (1.) You will meet with some that are the sons of peace, that by the operations of the divine grace, pursuant to the designations of the divine counsel, are ready to admit the word of the gospel, in the light and love of it, and have their hearts made as soft wax, to receive the impressions of it. Those are qualified to receive the comforts of the gospel, in whom there is a good work of grace wrought. And as to those, your peace shall find them out, and rest upon them, your prayers for them shall be heard, the promises of the gospel shall be confirmed to them, the privileges of it conferred on them, and the fruit of both shall remain and continue with them; a good part that shall not be taken away. (2.) You will meet with others, that are no ways disposed to hear or heed your message; whole houses that have not one son of peace in them; now it is certain, our peace shall not come upon them, they have no part or lot in the matter; the blessing that rests upon the sons of peace, shall never come upon the sons of Belial, nor can any expect the blessings of the covenant, that will not come under the bonds of it. But it shall return to us again, that is, we shall have the comfort of having done our duty to God, and discharged our trust. Our prayers, like David's, shall return into our own bosom, Psal. xxxv. 13. and we shall have commission to go on in the work. Our peace shall return to us again, not only to be enjoyed by ourselves, but to be communicated to others, to the next we meet with, them that are sons of peace.

5. They must receive the kindnesses of those that did entertain them, and bid them welcome, ver. 7, 8. Those that receive the gospel, will receive you that preach it, and give you entertainment; you must not think to raise estates, but you may depend upon a subsistence; and, (1.) Be not shy; do not suspect your welcome, nor be afraid of being troublesome, but eat and drink heartily, such things as they give; for whatever kindness they shew you, it is but a small return for the kindness you do them, in bringing the glad tidings of peace. You well deserve it, for the labourer is worthy of his hire, the labourer in the work of the ministry is so, if he be indeed a labourer; and it is not an act of charity, but of justice, in them who are taught in the word, to communicate to them that teach them. (2.) Be not nice and curious in your diet, eat and drink such things as they give, ver. 7. such things as are set before you, ver. 8. Be thankful for plain food, and do not find fault, though it be not dressed according to art. It ill becomes Christ's disciples to be desirous of dainties. As he has not tied them up to the Pharisees superstitious fasts, so he has not allowed them the luxurious feasts of the Epicures. Probably, Christ here refers to the traditions of the elders about their meat, which were so many, that those who observed them were extremely critical; you could hardly set a dish of meat before them, but there was some scruple or other concerning it; but Christ would not have them to regard those things, but eat what was given them, asking no question for conscience sake.

6. They must denounce the judgments of God against those who rejected them and their message. If you enter into a city, and they do not receive you, if there be none there disposed to hearken to your doctrine, leave them, ver. 10. If they will not give you welcome into their houses, do you give them warning in their streets; he orders them to do, as, chap. ix. 5. he had ordered the apostles to do, say to them, not with rage, or scorn, or resentment, but with compassion to their poor, perishing souls, and a holy dread of the ruin which they are bringing upon themselves, even the dust of your city which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you, ver. 11. from them do not receive any kindnesses at all, be not beholden to them; it cost that prophet of the Lord dear, who accepted a meal's meat with a prophet in Bethel, 1 Kings xiii. 21, 22. Tell them you will not carry away with you the dust of their city, let them take it to themselves, for dust they are. It shall be a witness for Christ's messengers, that they had been there according to their Master's order; tender and refusal was a discharge of their trust: But it shall be a witness against the recusants, that they would not give Christ's messengers any entertainment, no not so much as water to wash their feet with, but they were forced to wipe off the dust. But tell them plainly, and bid them be sure of it, *The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you*. Here is a fair offer made you, if you have not the benefit of it, it is your own fault. The gospel is brought to your doors, if you shut your doors against it, your blood is upon your own head. Now the kingdom of God is come nigh to you, if you will not



not come up to it, and come into it, your sin will be inexcusable, and your condemnation intolerable. Note, The fairer offers we have of grace and life by Christ, the more we shall have to answer for another day, if we slight these offers. *It shall be more tolerable for Sodom, than for that city*, ver. 12. The Sodomites indeed rejected the warning given them by Lot, but rejecting the gospel is a more heinous crime, and will be punished accordingly *in that day*; he means the day of judgment, ver. 14. but calls it by way of emphasis *that day*, because it is the last and great day, the day when we must account for all the *days of time*, and have our state determined for the *days of eternity*.

Upon this occasion the evangelist repeats,

1. The particular doom of those cities wherein most of Christ's mighty works were done, which we had, *Matt. xi. 21. &c.* Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, all bordering upon the sea of Galilee, where Christ was most conversant, are the places here mentioned. (1.) They enjoyed greater privileges; Christ's *mighty works were done in them*, and they were all gracious works, works of mercy. They were hereby *exalted to heaven*, not only dignified and honoured, but put into a fair way of being happy; they were brought as near heaven as external means could bring them. (2.) God's design in favouring them thus, was to bring them to *repentance and reformation of life*; to *sit in sackcloth and ashes*, both in humiliation for the sins they had committed, and in humility, and a meek subjection to God's government. (3.) Their frustrating this design, and their receiving the grace of God therein in vain; it is implied, that they *repented not*, they were not wrought upon by all the miracles of Christ, to think the better of him, or the worse of sin. They did not bring forth fruits agreeable to the advantages they enjoyed. (4.) There was reason to think, morally speaking, that if Christ had gone to Tyre and Sidon, Gentile cities, and had preached the same doctrine to them, and wrought the same miracles among them that he did in these cities of Israel, they would have repented *long ago*, so speedy would their repentance have been, and that in *sackcloth and ashes*, so deep would it have been. Now to understand the wisdom of God, in *giving* the means of grace to those who would not improve them, and *denying* them to those that would, we must wait for the great day of discovery. (5.) The doom of those who thus received the grace of God in vain, will be very fearful; they that were *thus exalted*, not making use of their elevation, will be *thrust down to hell*; thrust down with disgrace and dishonour; they will thrust in to get into heaven, in the crowd of professors, but in vain, they shall be *thrust down* to their everlasting grief and disappointment, into the lowest hell, and hell will be hell indeed to them. (6.) In the day of judgment Tyre and Sidon will fare better, and it will be more tolerable for them than for these cities.

2. The general rule which Christ would go by, as to those to whom he sent his ministers; he will reckon himself treated according as they treated his ministers, ver. 16. What is done to the ambassador, is done, as it were, to the prince that sends him. (1.) *He that heareth you*, and regardeth what you say, *heareth me*, and therein doth me honour. But, (2.) *He that despiseth you*, doth in effect *despise me*, and shall be reckoned with, as having put an affront upon me; nay, he *despise him that sent me*. Note, Those that condemn the Christian religion, do in effect put a slight upon natural religion, which it is perfective of. And they who *despise* the faithful ministers of Christ, who, though they do not hate and persecute them, yet think meanly of them, look scornfully upon them, and turn their backs upon their ministry, will be reckoned with as despisers of God and Christ.

17. ¶ And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. 18. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning, fall from heaven. 19. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you: but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. 21. ¶ In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. 22. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. 23. ¶ And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. 24. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Christ sent forth the seventy disciples as he was going up to Jerusalem, to the *feast of the tabernacles*, when he *went up not openly*, but *as it were in secret*, John vii. 10. having sent abroad so great a part of his ordinary retinue; and Dr. Lightfoot thinks it was before his return from that feast, and while he was yet at Jerusalem or Bethany, which was hard by, for there he was, ver. 38. that they, or at least some of them, returned to him. Now here we are told,

1. What account they gave him of the success of their expedition, ver. 17. *They returned again with joy*; not complaining of the fatigue of their journeys, or of the opposition and discouragement they met with, but rejoicing in their success, especially in casting out unclean spirits; *Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name*; though the *healing of the sick* only was mentioned in their commission, ver. 9. yet no doubt the *casting out of devils* was included, and in this they had wonderful success: (1.) They give Christ the glory of this: *It is through thy name*. Note, All our victories over Satan are obtained by power derived from Jesus Christ: We must *in his name* enter the list with our spiritual enemies, and whatever advantages we gain, he must have all the praise; if the work be done *in his name*, the honour is due *to his name*. (2.) They entertain themselves with the comfort of it; they speak of it with an air of exultation, *even the devils*, those potent enemies are *subject to us*. Note, The saints have no greater joy or satisfaction in any of their triumphs than in those over Satan. If devils are *subject to us*, what can stand before us?

2. What acceptance they found with him, and how he entertained this account.

1. He confirmed what they said, as agreeing with his own observation, ver. 18. My heart and eye went along with you; I took notice what success you had, and I *saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven*. Note, Satan and his kingdom fell before the preaching of the gospel; I see how it is, saith Christ, as you get ground, the devil loseth ground: He falls *as lightning falls from heaven*, so suddenly, so irrecoverably, so visibly, that all may perceive it, and say, see how Satan's kingdom totters, see how it tumbles. They triumphed in the casting of devils out of the bodies of people; but Christ sees and rejoiceth in the fall of the devil, from the interest he has in the souls of men; which is called his power *in high places*, Eph. vi. 12. He foresees this to be but an earnest of what should now be shortly done, and was already begun, the destroying of Satan's kingdom in the world, by the extirpating of idolatry, and the turning of the nations to the faith of Christ. *Satan falls from heaven*, when he falls from the throne in mens hearts, *Acts xxvi. 18*. And Christ foresaw that the preaching of the gospel, which would *fly like lightning* through the world, would, wherever it went, pull down Satan's kingdom. *Now is the prince of this world cast out*. Some have given another sense of this, as looking back to the fall of the angels, and designed for a caution to these disciples, lest their success should puff them up with pride: I saw angels turned into devils by *pride*, that was the sin for which Satan was *cast down from heaven*, where he had been an angel of light; I saw it, and give you an intimation of it, lest you, being *lifted up with pride*, should fall into that condemnation of the devil, who fell by pride, 1 Tim. iii. 6.

2. He repeated, ratified, and enlarged their commission, ver. 19. *Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents*. Note, To him that hath, and useth well what he hath, more shall be given. They had employed their power vigorously against Satan, and now Christ entrusts them with greater power. (1.) An *offensive* power, power to *tread on serpents and scorpions*, i. e. devils, malignant spirits, the old serpents; you shall *bruise their heads* in my name, according to the first promise, Gen. iii. 15. Come, *set your feet on the necks* of these enemies; you shall tread upon these *lions and adders* wherever you meet with them, you shall *trample them under foot*, Psal. xci. 13. You shall *tread upon all the power of the enemy*, and the kingdom of the Messiah shall be every where set up upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom; as the devils have now been *subject to you*, so they shall still be. (2.) A *defensive* power: *Nothing shall by any means hurt you*; not *serpents or scorpions*, if you should be chastised with them, or thrown into prisons and dungeons among them; you shall be unhurt by the most venomous creatures, as St. Paul was, *Acts xxviii. 5*. and as is promised, *Matt. xvi. 18*. If wicked men be as *serpents* to you, and you *dwell* among those *scorpions*, as *Ezek. ii. 6*. you may despise their rage, and *tread upon it*, it needs not disturb you, for they have no power against you but what is *given them from above*; they may *bite*, but they cannot *hurt*. You may play upon the hole of the asp, for *death itself shall not hurt or destroy*, Isa. xi. 8, 19. — xxv. 3.

3. He directed them to turn their joy into the right chanel, ver. 20. *Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you*, that they have been so, and shall be still so: Do not rejoice in this only as it is your honour, and a confirmation of your mission, and as it sets you a degree above other good people, do not rejoice in this *only*, or in this *chiefly*, but *rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven*, i. e. because you are chosen of God to eternal life, and are the children of God through faith. Christ, who knew the counsels of God, could



could tell them, that their names were written in heaven, for it is the Lamb's book of life that they are written in. All believers are through grace entitled to the inheritance of sons, and have received the adoption of sons, and the Spirit of adoption, which is the earnest of that inheritance, and so are enrolled among his family; now this is matter of joy, greater joy than casting out devils. Note, Power to become the children of God, is to be valued more than a power to work miracles: For we read of those who did in Christ's name cast out devils, as Judas did, and yet will be disowned by Christ in the great day; but they whose names are written in heaven shall never perish, they are Christ's sheep, to whom he will give eternal life. Saving graces are more to be rejoiced in than spiritual gifts; holy love is a more excellent way than speaking with tongues.

4. He offered up a solemn thanksgiving to his Father, for employing such mean people as his disciples were, in such high and honourable services, ver. 21, 22. this we had before, Matt. xi. 25, 26, 27, only here it is prefixed, that in that hour Jesus rejoiceth, it was fit particular notice should be taken of that hour, because there were so few such, for he was a man of sorrows, in that hour he saw Satan fall, and heard of the good success of his ministers, in that hour he rejoiced. Note, Nothing rejoiceth the heart of the Lord Jesus so much, as the progress of the gospel, and its getting ground of Satan, by the conversion of souls to Christ. Christ's joy was a solid substantial joy, an inward joy, he rejoiced in spirit; but his joy, like deep waters, made no noise; it was joy that a stranger did not intermeddle with; before he applied himself to thank his Father, he stirred up himself to rejoice; for as thankful praise is the genuine language of holy joy, so holy joy is the root and spring of thankful praise. Two things he gives thanks for:

(1.) For what was revealed by the Father through the Son, ver. 21. *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth.* In all our adorations of God we must have an eye to him, both as the Maker of heaven and earth, and as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father. Now, that which he gives thanks for, is, (1.) That the counsels of God concerning man's reconciliation to himself, were revealed to some of the children of men, who might be fit also to teach others, and it is God that by his Son hath spoken these things to us, and by his Spirit has revealed them in us; he hath revealed that which had been kept secret from the beginning of the world. (2.) That they were revealed to babes, to those that were of mean parts and capacities, whose extraction and education had nothing in it promising, who were but children in understanding, till God, by his Spirit, elevated their faculties, and furnished them with this knowledge, and an ability to communicate it. We have reason to thank God, not so much for the honour he has hereby put upon the babes, as for the honour he has hereby done himself in perfecting strength out of weakness. (3.) That at the same time when he revealed them unto babes, he hid them from the wise and prudent, the Gentile philosophers, the Jewish rabbins. He did not reveal the things of the gospel to them, nor employ them in preaching up his kingdom, thanks be to God that the apostles were not fetched from their schools: For, (1.) They would have been apt to mingle their notions with the doctrine of Christ, which would have corrupted it, as afterwards it proved. For Christianity was much corrupted by the Platonists philosophy, in the first ages of it, and by the Peripatetic in its latter ages, and by the Judaizing teachers at the first planting of it. (2.) If rabbins and philosophers had been made apostles, the success of the gospel would have been ascribed to their learning and wit, and the force of their reasonings and eloquence, and therefore they must not be employed lest they should have taken too much to themselves, and others should have attributed too much to them; they were past by for the same reason that Gideon's army was reduced, *The people are yet too many*, Judg. vii. 4. Paul indeed was bred a scholar among the wise and prudent, but he became a babe when he became an apostle, and laid aside the enticing words of man's wisdom, forgot them all, and made neither shew nor use of any other knowledge, but that of Christ and him crucified, 1 Cor. ii. 2, 4. (4.) That God herein acted in it by way of sovereignty, even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. If God gives his grace, and the knowledge of his Son, to some that are less likely, and do not give it to others, who we would think better able to deliver it with advantage; this must satisfy, so it pleaseth God, whose thoughts are infinitely above ours. He chuseth to entrust the dispensing of his gospel in the hands of those, who with a divine energy, will give it the setting on, rather than in theirs, who with human art will give it the setting off.

(2.) For what was secret between the Father and the Son, ver. 22. (1.) The vast confidence that the Father puts in the Son. *All things are delivered to me of my Father:* All wisdom and knowledge; all power and authority; all that grace and comfort which is intended for the chosen remnant, it is all delivered into the hands of the Lord Jesus; in him all fulness must dwell, and from him it must be derived: He is the great trustee that manageth all the concerns of God's kingdom. (2.) The good understanding that there is between the Father and the Son, and their mutual consciousness, such as no creature can be admitted to. No

man knows who the Son is, nor what his mind is, but the Father, who possessed him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old, Prov. viii. 22. Nor who the Father is, and what his counsels are, but the Son who lay in his bosom from eternity, was by him as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight, Prov. viii. 20, and he to whom the Son, by the Spirit will reveal him. The gospel is the revelation of Jesus Christ, and to him we owe all the discoveries made us of the will of God for our salvation, and here he speaks of it as that which was a great pleasure to himself, and for which he was very thankful to his Father to be so intrusted.

5. He told his disciples how well it was for them, that they had these things revealed to them, ver. 23, 24. Having addressed himself to his Father, he turned him to his disciples, designing to make them sensible how much it was for their happiness, as well as for the glory and honour of God, that they knew the mysteries of the kingdom, and were employed to lead others into the knowledge of them, considering, (1.) What a step it is towards something better, though the bare knowledge of these things is not saving, yet it puts us in the way of salvation; *blest are the eyes which see the things which ye see.* God therein blesteth them, and if it be not their own fault, it will be an eternal blessedness to them. (2.) What a step it is above those that went before them, even the greatest saints, and those that were most the favourites of heaven, many prophets and righteous men, so it is, Matt. xiii. 17. *Many prophets and kings;* so it is here, *have desired to see and hear those things which you are daily and intimately conversant with, and have not seen and heard them.* The honour and happiness of the New Testament saints, far exceeds that even of the prophets and kings of the Old Testament, though they also were highly favoured. The general ideas which the Old Testament saints had, according to the intimations given them of the graces and glories of the Messiah's kingdom, made them wish a thousand times, that their lot had been reserved for those blessed days, and that they might see the substance of those things which they had faint shadows of. Note, The consideration of the great advantages which we have in the New Testament light, above what they had who lived in Old Testament times, should awaken our diligence in the improvement of it, for if it do not, it will aggravate our condemnation for the non-improvement of it.

25. ¶ And behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26. He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? 27. And he answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thy self. 28. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. 29. But he willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? 30. And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. 33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. 36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37. And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

We have here Christ's discourse with a lawyer about some points of conscience, which we are all concerned to be rightly informed in, and are so here from Christ, though the questions were proposed with no good intention.

First, We are concerned to know what that good is which we should do in this life, in order to our attaining eternal life: A question to this purpose was proposed to our Saviour, by a certain lawyer, or scribe, only with a design to try him; not with a desire to be instructed by him, ver. 25. The lawyer stood up, and asked him, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? If Christ had any thing peculiar to prescribe, by this question he would get it out of him, and perhaps expose him for



for it; if not, he would expose his doctrine as needless, since it would give no other direction for obtaining happiness than what they had already received; or, perhaps he had no malicious design against Christ, as some of the Scribes had, only he was willing to have a little talk with him, just as people go to church to hear what the minister will say. This was a good question, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* But it lost all its goodness when it was proposed with an ill design, or a very mean one. Note, It is not enough to speak of the things of God, and to enquire about them, but we must do it with an agreeable concern. If we speak of *eternal life*, and *the way* to it in a careless manner, merely as matter of discourse, especially as matter of dispute, we do but take the name of God in vain, as the lawyer here did.

Now this question being started, observe,

1. How Christ turned him over to the divine law, and bid him follow the direction of that. Though he knew the thoughts and intents of his heart, he doth not answer him according to the folly of that, but according to the wisdom and goodness of the question he asked. He answered him with a question, *What is written in the law, how readest thou?* ver. 26. He came to catechize Christ, and to know him, but Christ will catechize him, and make him know himself. He talks to him as a lawyer, as one conversant in the law, the studies of his profession would inform him; let him practise according to his knowledge, and he should not come short of *eternal life*. Note, It will be of good use to us in our way to heaven, to consider *what is written in the law*, and *what we read* there. We must have recourse to our bibles, to the law, as it is now in the hand of Christ, and walk in the way that is shewed us there. It is a great mercy that we have the law *written*, that we have it thereby reduced to certainty, and that thereby it is capable of spreading the *further*, and lasting the *longer*. Having it *written*, it is our duty to read it, and to read it with understanding, and to treasure up what we read, so that when there is occasion we may be able to tell *what is written in the law*, and *how we read*. And to this we must appeal, by this we must try doctrines, and end disputes; this must be our oracle, our touchstone, our rule, our guide, what is written in the law, how do we read. If there be light in us, it will have regard to this light.

2. What a good account he gave of the law, of the principal commandments of the law, which we must bind ourselves to the observance of, if we would inherit eternal life. He did not like a Pharisee, refer himself to the tradition of the elders, but like a good textuary fastened upon the two first and greatest commandments of the law, as those which he thought must be most strictly observed in order to the obtaining of *eternal life*, and which included all the rest, ver. 27. (1.) We must love God *with all our hearts*, must look upon him as the best of beings in himself, most amiable, and infinitely perfect and excellent, as one whom we lie under the greatest obligations to, both in gratitude and interest. We must prize him, and value ourselves by our relation to him; must please ourselves in him, and devote ourselves entirely to him. Our love in him must be sincere and hearty, and fervent; it must be a superlative love, a love that is as strong as death, but an intelligent love, and such as we can give a good account of the grounds and reasons of. It must be an *entire* love, he must have our *whole* souls, and must be served with *all that is within us*. We must love nothing *beside him*, but what we love *for him*, and in subordination to him. (2.) We must love our neighbours as *ourselves*, which we shall easily do, if we, as we ought to do, love God *better than ourselves*. We must wish well to all, and ill in none; must do all the good we can in the world, and no hurt, and must fix it as a rule to ourselves, to do to others as we would they should do to us, and this is to love our neighbour *as ourselves*.

3. Christ's approbation of what he said, ver. 28. Though he came to tempt him, yet what he said that was good, Christ commended; *thou hast answered right*. Christ himself fastened upon those as the two great commandments of the law, Matt. xxii. 37. both sides agreed in this. Those who do well shall have praise of the same, and so should those have that speak well; so far is right: but the hardest part of this work yet remains, *this do, and thou shalt live*; thou shalt inherit eternal life.

4. His care to avoid the conviction which was now ready to fasten upon him. When Christ said, *This do, and thou shalt live*, he began to be aware that Christ intended to draw from him an acknowledgment that he *had not done this*, and therefore an enquiry what he should do, and which way he should look to get his sins pardoned; and likewise an acknowledgment that he *could not do this* perfectly, for the future, by any strength of his own, and therefore an enquiry which way he might fetch in strength to enable him to do it; but he was *willing to justify himself*, and therefore cared not for carrying on that discourse, but faith, in effect, as another did, Matt. xix. 20. *All these things have I kept from my youth up*. Note, Many ask good questions with a design rather to *justify themselves*, than to *inform themselves*; rather proudly to shew what is good in them, than humbly to see what is bad in them.

Secondly, We are concerned to know who is our neighbour; whom by the second great commandment we are obliged to love.

No. xc.

And this is another of this lawyer's queries, which he started only that he might *drop* the former, lest Christ should have forced him in the prosecution of it to *condemn himself*, when he was resolved to *justify* himself. As to loving God he was willing to say no more of it, but as to his *neighbour*, he was sure there he had come up to the rule; for he had always been very kind and respectful to all about him. Now observe,

1. What was the corrupt notion of the Jewish teachers in this matter: Dr. Lightfoot quotes their own words to this purpose, where he saith, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour, he excepts all Gentiles*, for they are not *our neighbours*, but those only that are of our own nation and religion. They would not put an Israelite to death for killing a Gentile, for he was not *his neighbour*: indeed they say, they ought not to kill a Gentile, that they were not at war with; but if they saw a Gentile in *danger of death*, they thought themselves under no obligation to help to *save his life*. Such wicked inferences did they draw from that holy covenant of peculiarity, which God had distinguished them by, and by abusing it thus they had forfeited it; and God justly took the forfeiture, and transferred covenant favours to the Gentile world, to whom they brutishly denied common favours.

2. How Christ corrected this inhuman notion, and shewed by a parable, that whoever we *have need* to receive kindness from, and *find ready* to shew us the kindness *we need*, we cannot but look upon as *our neighbour*, and therefore ought to look upon all those as such who need our kindness, and to shew them kindness accordingly, though they be not of our own nation and religion. Now observe,

1. The parable itself, which represents to us a poor Jew in distressed circumstances, succoured and relieved by a good Samaritan. Let us see here,

1. How he was *abused* by his *enemies*: the honest man was travelling peaceably upon his lawful occasions in the road, and it was a great road that leads from Jerusalem to Jericho, ver. 30. The mentioning of those places intimates that it was matter of fact, and not a parable, and probably it happened lately, just as it is here related. The occurrences of providence would yield us many good instructions, if we would carefully observe and improve them, and would be equivalent to parables framed on purpose for instruction, and be more *affecting*. This poor man *fell among thieves*. Whether they were Arabians, rapparees, that lived by spoil, or some profligate wretches of his own nation, or some of the Roman soldiers who notwithstanding the strict discipline of their army did this villany, doth not appear; but they were very *barbarous*, they not only took his money, but stripped him of his clothes, and that he might not be able to pursue them, or only to gratify a cruel disposition, (for otherwise *what profit was there in his blood?*) they *wounded him*, and left him *half dead*, ready to die of his wounds. We may here conceive a just indignation at *highwaymen*, that have divested themselves of all humanity, and are as natural brute-beasts, beasts of prey, made to be *taken and destroyed*; and at the same time we cannot but think with compassion on those that fall into the hands of such wicked and unreasonable men, and be ready when it is in our power to help them. And what reason have we to thank God for our preservation from perils by robbers!

2. How he was *sighted* by those that should have been his friends, who were not only men of his own nation and religion, but one a priest, and the other a Levite, men of a publick character and station: nay, they were men of professed sanctity, whose offices obliged them to tenderness and compassion, Heb. v. 2. who ought to teach others their duty in such a case as this, which was to *deliver them that were drawn unto death*, yet they would not themselves do it. Dr. Lightfoot tells us that many of the courses of the priests had their residence in Jericho, and from thence came up to Jerusalem, when it was their turn to officiate there, and so back again, which occasioned abundance of *passing* and *repassing* of priests that way, and Levites, their attendants; they came *this way*, and saw the poor wounded man, it is likely, heard his groans, and could not but perceive that if he were not helped he must quickly perish. The Levite not only saw him, but *came and looked on him*, ver. 32. but they *passed by on the other side*; when they saw his case they got as far off him as ever they could, as if they would have had a pretence to say, *Behold, we know it not*. It is sad when those who should be examples of charity, were prodigies of cruelty; and who should, by displaying the mercies of God, open the bowels of others compassion, shut up their own.

3. How he was *succoured* and *relieved* by a *stranger*, a *certain Samaritan*, of that nation, which of all other the Jews despised and detested, and would have no dealings with, this man had some humanity in him, ver. 33. The priest had his heart hardened against one of *his own people*, but the Samaritan had his opened towards one of *another people*; *when he saw him he had compassion on him*, and never took into consideration what country he was of: though he was a Jew, he was man, and a man in *misery*, and he has learned to honour all men: he knows not how soon this poor man's case may be his own, and therefore pities him, as he himself would desire and expect to be pitied in the like case. That so great love should be found in a Samaritan, was, perhaps, thought as that great faith which Christ admired in a Roman,



in a woman of Canaan ; but really was not so, for pity is the work of a man, but faith is the work of divine grace.

The *compassion* of this Samaritan was not an idle compassion ; he did not think it enough to say, he healed, he helped (*Jam. ii. 16.*) but when he *drew out his soul*, he *reached forth his hand* also to this poor *needy* creature, *Isa. lviii. 7, 10. Prov. xxxi. 20.* See how friendly this good Samaritan was, (1.) He *went to the poor man*, whom the priest and Levite kept at a distance from, he enquired, no doubt, how he came into this deplorable condition, and consoled him. (2.) He did the surgeon's part for want of a better ; he *bound up his wounds*, making use of his own linen, it is likely, for that purpose ; and poured in oil and wine, which, perhaps, he had with him ; wine to wash the wound, and oil to mollify it, and close it up : he did all he could to ease the pain, and prevent the peril of his wounds, as one whose heart bled with them. (3.) He *set him on his own beast*, and went on foot himself, and *brought him to an inn*. And a great mercy it is to have inns upon the road, where we may be furnished for our money with all conveniencies for food and rest. Perhaps the Samaritan, if he had not met with this hindrance, would have got that night to his journey's end ; but in compassion to that poor man he takes up short at an inn. Some think the priest and Levite pretend they could not stay to help the poor man, because they were in haste to go and attend the temple-service at Jerusalem. We suppose this Samaritan went upon business ; but he understood that both his own business and God's sacrifice too must give place to such an act of mercy as this. (4.) He *took care of him* in the inn, got him to bed, had food for him that was proper, and due attendance, and, it may be, prayed with him. Nay, (5.) As if he had been his own child, or one he was obliged to look after, when he left him next morning, he left money with the landlord to be laid out for his use, and passed his word for what he should spend more. *Two-pence* of their money was about fifteen-pence of ours, which, according to the rate of things then, would go a great way ; however here it was an earnest of content to the full of all demands. Now all this was kind and generous, and as much as one could have expected from a friend or a brother ; and yet here it is done by a stranger and foreigner.

Now this parable is applicable to another purpose than that for which it was intended ; and doth excellently set forth the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards sinful, miserable man. We were like this poor distressed traveller : Satan, our enemy, had *robbed us, stripped us, wounded us*, such is the mischief that sin hath done us ; we are by nature more than *half dead*, twice dead in trespasses and sins ; utterly unable to help ourselves, for we were without strength. The law of Moses, like the priest and Levite, the ministers of that law, *looks upon us*, but has no compassion on us, gives us no relief, it *passeth by on the other side*, as having neither pity nor power to help us : but then comes the blessed Jesus, that good Samaritan, (and they said of him by way of reproach, *He is a Samaritan*) he has compassion on us, he binds up our bleeding wounds, (*Psal. cxlvii. 3. Isa. vi. 1.*) pours in not oil and wine, but that which is infinitely more precious, *his own blood* : he takes care of us, and bids us put all the expences of our cure upon his account ; and all this, though he was none of us, till he was pleased by his voluntary condescension to make himself so, but infinitely above us. This magnifies the riches of his love, and obligeth us all to say, How much are we indebted, and what shall we render ?

#### 2. The reddition or application of the parable.

1. The truth contained in it is extorted from the lawyer's own mouth. Now tell me, faith Christ, *Which of those three was neighbour to him that fell among thieves*, ver. 36. the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan ? Which of those did the neighbour's part ? To this the lawyer would not answer as he ought to have done, doubtless the Samaritan was ; but *he that shewed mercy on him*, doubtless he was a good neighbour to him, and very neighbourly, and he could not but say it was a good work thus to save an honest Jew from perishing.

2. The duty inferred from it is pressed home upon the lawyer's own conscience ; *Go, and do thou likewise*. The duty of relations is mutual and reciprocal ; the titles of friends, brethren, neighbours, are as Grotius here speaks, *τὸν πρὸς τι* equally binding on both sides : if one side be bound, the other cannot be loose, as is agreed in all contracts. If a Samaritan doth well that helps a distressed Jew, certainly a Jew doth not well if he do not in like manner help a distressed Samaritan. *Petimusque damusque vicissim*. And therefore *go thou* and do as the Samaritan did, whenever occasion offers ; shew mercy to those that need thy help, and do it freely, and with concern and compassion, though they be not of thy own nation, and thy own profession, opinion, and communion in religion. Let thy charity be thus extensive before thou boastest of having conformed thyself to that great commandment of *loving thy neighbour*. This lawyer valued himself much upon his learning, and his knowledge of the laws, and in that he thought to have puzzled Christ himself, but Christ sends him to school to a Samaritan to learn his duty ; go and do like him. Note, It is the duty of every one of us, in our places, and according to our ability, to succour, help, and relieve all that are in distress and necessity, and of lawyers, particularly,

and herein we must study to excel many that are proud of their being priests and Levites.

38. ¶ Now it came to pass, as they went, he entered into a certain village : and a certain woman named Martha, received him into her house. 39. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus feet, and heard his word. 40. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone ? bid her therefore that she help me. 41. And Jesus answered, and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things : 42. But one thing is needful. And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

We may observe in this story,

First, The entertainment which Martha gave to Christ and his disciples at her house, ver. 38. Observe, 1. Christ's coming to the village where Martha lived. *As they went* (Christ and his disciples together) he and they with him *entered into a certain village*. This village was Bethany, nigh to Jerusalem, whither Christ was now going up, and he took this in his way. Note, 1. Our Lord Jesus went about doing good, *Acts x. 38.* scattering his benign beams and influences as the true light of the world. 2. Wherever Christ went, his disciples went along with him. 3. Christ honoured the country villages with his presence and favour, and not the great and populous cities only, for as he *chose privacy*, so he *countenanced poverty*.

2. His reception at Martha's house. *A certain woman named Martha received him into her house*, and bid him welcome, for she was the housekeeper. Note, 1. Our Lord Jesus, when he was here upon earth, was so poor, that he was necessitated to be beholden to his friends for a subsistence. Though he was Sion's king, he had no house of his own either in Jerusalem or near it. 2. There were some that were Christ's particular friends, whom he loved more than other of his friends, and them he visited most frequently. He *loved this family*, *John xi. 5.* and often invited himself to them. Christ's visits are the token of his love, *John xiv. 22.* 3. There were those who kindly received Christ into their houses, when he was here upon earth. It is called Martha's house, for probably she was a widow, and was the housekeeper. Though it was chargeable to entertain Christ, for he did not come alone, but brought his disciples with him, yet she would not stick at the expence of it : how can we spend what we have better than in Christ's service ! nay, though at this time it was grown dangerous to entertain him, especially so near Jerusalem, yet she cared not what hazard she run, for his name's sake, though there were many that rejected him, and would not entertain him, yet there was one that bid him welcome. Though Christ is every where spoken against, yet there is a remnant to whom he is dear, and that are dear to him.

Secondly, The attendance which Mary, the sister of Martha, gave upon the word of Christ, ver. 20. (1.) She *heard his word*. It seems, our Lord Jesus as soon as he came into Martha's house, even before entertainment was got for him, addressed himself to his great work of preaching the gospel : he presently took the chair with solemnity, for Mary sat to hear him, which intimates that it was a continued discourse. Note, A good sermon is never the worse for being preached in a house ; and the visits of our friends should be so managed, as to make them turn to a spiritual advantage. Mary having this price put into her hands, sat herself to improve it, not knowing when she should have such another. Since Christ is forward to speak, we should be *swift to hear*. 2. She sat to hear, which notes a close attention ; her mind was composed, and she resolved to abide by it ; not to catch a word now and then, but to receive all that Christ delivered. She *sat at his feet*, as scholars at the feet of their tutors when they read their lectures ; hence Paul is said to be *brought up at the feet of Gamaliel*. Our sitting at Christ's feet, when we hear his word, signifies a readiness to receive his word, and a submission and entire resignation of ourselves to the conduct of it. We must either sit at Christ's feet, or be made his footstool ; but if we sit with him at his feet now, we shall sit with him on his throne shortly.

Thirdly, The care of Martha about her domestick affairs. But Martha *was cumbered about much serving*, ver. 40. and that was the reason why she was not where Mary was, sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word. She was providing for the entertainment of Christ, and those that came with him. Perhaps she had no notice before of his coming, and she was unprovided, but was in care to have every thing handsome, upon this occasion, she had not such guests every day. And housekeepers know what care and bustle there must be, when a great entertainment is to be made. Observe here,

1. Something commendable, which must not be overlooked. (1.) Here was a commendable *respect to our Lord Jesus*, for we have reason to think it was not for ostentation, but purely to testify



testify her good will to him, that she made this entertainment. Note, Those who truly love Christ, will think that well bestowed that is laid out for his honour. (2.) Here was a commendable care of her household affairs. It appears by the respect shewed to this family among the Jews, (*John xi. 19.*) that they were persons of some charity and distinction, and yet Martha herself did not think it a disparagement to her, to lay her hand even to the service of the family, when there was occasion for it. Note, It is the duty of those who have the charge of families, to look well to the ways of their household. The affectation of state, and the love of ease, makes many families neglected.

2. Here was something culpable, which we must take notice of too. (1.) She was for much serving; her heart was upon it, to have a very sumptuous and splendid entertainment; great plenty, great variety, and great exactness, according to the fashion of the place. She was in care, *περί πολλῶν διακονίαν*, concerning much attendance. Note, it doth not become the disciples of Christ to affect much serving, to affect varieties, dainties, and superfluities, in eating and drinking; what needs much serving, when much less will serve? (2.) She was cumbered about it *περιεσπᾶτο*. She was just distracted with it. Note, Whatever cares the providence of God casts upon us, we must not be cumbered with them, nor be disquieted and perplexed by them. Care is good, and duty, but cumber is sin and folly. (3.) She was then cumbered about much serving, when she should have been with her sister sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. Note, Worldly business is then a snare to us, when it hinders us from serving God, and getting good to our souls.

Fourthly, The complaint which Martha made to Christ, against her sister Mary, for not assisting her, upon this occasion, in the business of the house, ver. 40. Lord, dost thou not care that my sister, who is concerned as well as I in having things done well, has left me to serve alone; therefore dismiss her from attending thee, and bid her come help me.

Now, 1. This complaint of Martha's may be considered as a discovery of her worldliness: It was the language of her inordinate care and cumber. She speaks as one in a mighty passion with her sister, else she would not have troubled Christ with the matter. Note, The inordinancy of worldly cares and pursuits, is often the occasion of disturbance in families, and of strife and contention among relations. And those that are eager upon the world themselves, are apt to blame and censure those that are not so too; and while they justify themselves in their worldliness, and judge of others, by their serviceableness to them in their worldly pursuits, they are ready to condemn those who addict themselves to the exercises of religion, as if they neglected the main chance, as they call it, Martha being angry at her sister, appealed to Christ, and would have him to say, she did well to be angry. Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? It should seem as if Christ had sometimes expressed himself tenderly concerned for her, and her ease and comfort, and would not have her go through so much toil and trouble, and she expected he should now bid her sister take her share in it. When Martha was caring, she must have Mary and Christ, and all, to care too, or she is not pleased. Note, Those are not always in the right, that are most forward to appeal to God; we must therefore take heed, lest we at any time expect, that Christ should espouse our unjust and groundless quarrels. The cares he casts upon us, we may cheerfully cast upon him, but not those which we foolishly draw upon ourselves. He will be the patron of the poor and injured, but not of the turbulent and injurious.

2. It may be considered as a discouragement of Mary's piety and devotion. Her sister should have commended her for it; should have told her that she was in the right; but, instead of that, she condemns her, as wanting in her duty. Note, It is no strange thing for those that are zealous in religion to meet with hindrances and discouragements, from those that are about them, not only with opposition from enemies, but with blame and censure from their friends. David's fasting, and his dancing before the ark, were turned to his reproach.

Fifthly, the reproof which Christ gave to Martha, for her inordinate care, ver. 41. she appealed to him, and he gives judgment against her. Martha, Martha, Thou art careful and troubled about many things, whereas but one thing is needful.

1. He reproveth her, though he was, at this time, her guest, and her fault was her over sollicitude to entertain him, and she expected he should justify her in it, yet he publickly checked her for it. Note, As many as Christ loves he rebukes and chastens. Even those that are dear to Christ, if any thing be amiss in them, shall be sure to hear of it, Nevertheless I have something against thee.

2. When he reproveth her, he called her by her name, Martha. For reproofs are then most likely to do good, when they are particular, applied to particular persons and cases, as Nathan's to David, Thou art the man. He repeated her name, Martha, he speaks as one in earnest, and deeply concerned for her welfare. Those that are entangled in the cares of this life, are not easily disentangled. To them we must, call again and gain, O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.

3. That which he reproveth her for, was her being careful and troubled about many things. He was not pleased that she should think to please him, with a rich and splendid entertainment, and with perplexing herself to prepare it for him; whereas he would teach us, as not to be sensual in using such things, so not to be selfish in being willing others be troubled, no matter who, or how many, so we may be gratified. Christ reproveth her, both for the intenseness of her care; thou art careful and troubled, divided and disturbed, by thy care; and for the extensiveness of it, about many things: Thou dost grasp at many enjoyments, and so art troubled at many disappointments. Poor Martha, thou hast many things to fret at, and that puts thee out of humour, whereas less ado would serve. Note, Inordinate care and trouble about many things in this world, is a common fault among Christ's disciples, and is very displeasing to Christ, and it is that for which they often come under the rebukes of providence. If they fret for no just cause, it is just with him to order them something to fret at.

4. That which aggravated the sin and folly of her care was, that but one thing is needful. It is a low construction which some put upon this, that whereas Martha was in care to provide many dishes of meat, there was occasion but for one; one would be enough. There is need but of one thing, *ἐνός δὲ ἐστὶ χρεία*. If we take it so, it furnisheth us with a rule of temperance, not to affect varieties and dainties, but content to fit down to one dish of meat, to half one, Prov. xxiii. 1, 2, 3. It is a forced construction which some of the antients put upon it, but one is needful, in opposition to distractions: There is need of one heart to attend upon the word, not divided and hurried to and fro, as Martha's was at this time. But the one thing needful is certainly meant, of that which Mary made her choice, sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word. She was troubled about many things, when she should have applied herself to one; godliness unites the heart, which the world had divided. The many things she was troubled about were needless, while the one thing she neglected was needful. Martha's care and work was good in its proper season and place, but now she had something else to do, which was unspeakably more needful, and therefore should be done first, and most minded. She expected Christ to have blamed Mary, for not doing as she did, but he blamed her for not doing as Mary did, and we are sure the judgment of Christ is according to truth. And the day will come, when Martha will wish she had sitted where Mary did.

Sixthly, Christ's approbation and commendation of Mary, for her serious piety, Mary hath chosen the good part. Mary said nothing in her own defence; but since Martha has appealed to the Master, to him she is willing to refer it, and will abide by his award; and here we have it.

1. She had justly given the preference to that which best deserved it. For one thing is needful, this one thing that she has done, to give up herself to the conduct of Christ, and receive the law from his mouth. Note, Serious godliness is a needful thing, it is the one thing needful, for nothing without this, will do us any real good in this world, and nothing but this will go with us into another world.

2. She had herein wisely done well for herself, Christ justified Mary against her sister's clamours. However we may be censured and condemned by men for our piety and zeal, our Lord Jesus will take our part; but thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. Let not us then condemn the pious zeal of any, lest we set Christ against us, never be discouraged if we be censured for our pious zeal, for we have Christ for us. Note, Sooner or later Mary's choice will be justified, and all those who make that choice, and abide by it. But this was not all, he applauded her for her wisdom, she hath chosen the good part, for she chose to be with Christ, to take her part with him; she chose the better business, and the better happiness, and took the better way of honouring Christ, and of pleasing him, by receiving his word into her heart, than Martha did by providing for his entertainment in her house. Note, (1.) A part with Christ is a good part, it is a part for the soul and eternity, the part Christ gives to his favourites, John xiii. 8. who are partakers of Christ, Heb. iii. 14. and partakers with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. (2.) It is a part that shall never be taken away from those that have it. A portion in this life will certainly be taken away from us, at the furthest, when we shall be taken away from it: but nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ, and our part in that love. Men and devils cannot take it away from us, and God and Christ will not. (3.) It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us, to chuse this good part, to chuse the service of God for our business, and the favour of God for our happiness, and an interest in Christ, in order to both. In particular cases we must chuse that which has a tendency to religion; and reckon that best for us, that is best for our souls. Mary was at her choice, whether she would partake with Martha in her care, and get the reputation of a fine housekeeper, or sit at the feet of Christ, and approve herself a zealous disciple; and by her choice in this particular, Christ judgeth of her general choice. (4.) Those who chuse this good part, shall not only have what they chuse, but shall have their choice commended in the great day.



## C H A P. XI.

In this chapter, (1.) Christ teacheth his disciples to pray, and quickens and encourageth them, to be frequent, and instant, and importunate in prayer, ver. 1—13. (2.) He fully answereth the blasphemous imputation of the Pharisees, who charged him with casting out devils by virtue of a compact and confederacy with Belzebub, the prince of the devils, and shews the absurdity and wickedness of it, ver. 14—26. (3.) He shews the honour of obedient disciples, to be greater than that of his own mother, ver. 27, 28. (4.) He upbraids the men of that generation, for their infidelity and obliquity, notwithstanding all the means of conviction offered to them, ver. 29—36. (5.) He severely reproveth the Pharisees and lawyers for their hypocrisy, pride, and their oppressing of the consciences of those that submitted to them, and their hating and persecuting those that witnessed against their wickedness, ver. 37—54.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. 2. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3. Give us day by day our daily bread. 4. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. 5. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him: 7. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. 8. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend: yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. 9. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. 11. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12. Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Prayer is one of the great laws of natural religion: That man is a brute, is a monster, that never prays; that never gives glory to his Maker, nor feels his favour, nor owns his dependence upon him. One great design therefore of Christianity is, to assist us in prayer; to enforce the duty upon us, and to instruct us in it, and encourage us to expect advantage by it. Now here,

1. We find Christ himself praying in a certain place, probably where he used to pray, ver. 1. As God he was prayed to, as man he prayed; and though he were a Son, yet learned he this obedience. This evangelist has taken particular notice of Christ's praying often, more than other of the evangelists, when he was baptized, chap. iii. 21. he was praying: He withdrew into the wilderness and prayed, chap. v. 16. He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer. He was alone praying, chap. ix. 18. And soon after he went up into a mountain to pray, and as he prayed, he was transfigured, chap. ix. 28, 29. and here he was praying in a certain place. Thus like a genuine son of David, he gave himself unto prayer, Psal. cix. 4. whether Christ was now alone praying, and the disciples only knew that he was so, or whether he prayed with them, is uncertain; it is most probable they were joining with him.

2. His disciples applied themselves to him for direction in prayer; when he was praying, they asked, Lord, teach us to pray. Note, The gifts and graces of others should excite us to covet earnestly the same: Their zeal should provoke us to a holy imitation and emulation, why should not we do as well as they.

Observe. They came to him with this request, *when he ceased*; for they would not disturb him when he was at prayer, no, not with this good motion. Every thing is beautiful in its season. One of his disciples, in the name of the rest, and perhaps by their appointment, said, Lord, teach us. Note, Though Christ is apt to teach, yet he will for this be enquired of, and his disciples must attend him for instruction.

Now, (1.) Their request is, Lord, teach us to pray; give us a rule or model, by which to go in praying, and put words into our mouths. Note, It becomes the disciples of Christ, to apply themselves to him for instruction in prayer. Lord, teach us to pray, is, itself, a good prayer, and a very needful one, for it is a hard thing to pray well; and it is Jesus Christ only, that can teach us, by his word and Spirit, how to pray. Lord, teach me what it is to pray; Lord, excite and quicken me to the duty; Lord, direct me what to pray for; Lord, give me praying graces, that I may serve God acceptably in prayer; Lord, teach me to pray in proper words; give me a mouth and wisdom in prayer, that I may speak as I ought; teach me what I shall say.

(2.) Their plea is, as John also taught his disciples. He took care to instruct his disciples in this necessary duty, and we would be taught as they were, for we have a better Master than they had. Dr. Lightfoot's notion of this is, That whereas the Jews prayers were generally adorations and praises of God, and doxologies, John taught his disciples such prayers as were more filled up with petitions and requests; for it is said of them that they did *δευσεις ποιουνται*, make prayers, Luke v. 33. The word signifies such prayers as are properly petitionary: Now, Lord, teach us those, to be added to those benedictions of the name of God, which we have been accustomed to from our childhood. And according to this sense, Christ did there teach them a prayer consisting wholly of petitions, and even omitting the doxology which had been affixed; and the *amen*, which was usually said in the giving of thanks, 1 Cor. xiv. 16. and in the Psalms is added to doxologies only. This disciple need not to have urged John Baptist's example: Christ was more ready to teach than ever John Baptist was, and particularly taught to pray better than John did, or could, teach his disciples.

3. Christ gave them direction; much the same that he had given them before, in his sermon upon the mount, Matt. vi. 9. We cannot think that they had forgot it, but they thought to have had further and fuller instructions, and he did not, as yet, think fit to give them any; when the Spirit should be poured out upon them from on high, they would find all their requests couched in these few, and would be able, in words of their own, to expatiate and enlarge upon them. In Matthew he had directed them to pray after this manner; Here, *when ye pray, say*; which intimates that the Lord's prayer was intended to be used, both as a form of prayer, and a directory.

1. There are some differences between the Lord's prayer in Matthew and in Luke, by which it appears it was not the design of Christ that we should be tied up to these very words, for then there would have been no variation. Here is one difference in the translation only, which ought not to have been, when there is none in the original, and that is in the third petition; *as in heaven, so in earth*; whereas the words are the very same, and in the same order as in Matthew; but there is a difference in the fourth petition; in Matthew we pray give us daily bread *this day*; here, give it us *day by day*, καὶ ἡμετέραν, day by day is, give us each day, the bread which our bodies require, as they call for it: Not give us *this day* bread for many days to come; but as the Israelites had manna, let us have bread to day, for to day, and to morrow, for to morrow, that thus we may be kept in a continual dependence upon God, as children upon their parents, and may have our mercies fresh from his hand daily, and may find ourselves under fresh obligations, to do the work of every day in the day, according as the duty of the day requires, because we have from God the supplies of every day, in the day, according as the necessity of the day requires.

Here is likewise some difference in the fifth petition: In Matthew it is, *forgive us our debts*, as we forgive: Here it is *forgive us our sins*, which proves that our sins are our debts, for we forgive; not that our forgiving those that have offended us can merit pardon from God, or be an inducement to him to forgive us, he forgives for his own name's sake, and his Son's sake; but this is a very necessary qualification for forgiveness; and if God have wrought it in us, we may plead that work of his grace, for the enforcing of our petitions for the pardon of our sins; Lord, forgive us, for thou hast thyself inclined us to forgive others. Here is another addition here; we plead not only in general, we forgive our debtors, but in particular we profess to forgive every one that is indebted to us, without exception. We so forgive our debtors, as not to bear malice or ill-will to any, but true love to all, without any exception whatsoever.

Here also the doxology in the close is wholly omitted, and the *Amen*; for Christ would leave them at liberty to use that or any other doxology fetched out of David's psalms; or rather he left a vacuum here for to be filled up by a doxology more peculiar to the Christian institutes, ascribing glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.



2. Yet it is for substance the same; and we shall therefore <sup>here</sup> only gather up some general lessons from it.

1. That in prayer we ought to come to God, as children to a father, a common father to us and *all mankind*, but in a peculiar manner a father to all the disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us therefore, in our requests, both for others and for ourselves, come to him with a humble boldness, confiding in his power and goodness.

2. That at the same time, and in the same petitions wherein we address to God for *ourselves*, we should take in with us *all the children of men*, as God's creatures, and our fellow-creatures. A rooted principle of *catholic charity*, and of *Christian, sanctified humanity* should go along with us, and dictate to us throughout this prayer, which is so worded as to be accommodated to that noble principle.

3. That in order to the confirming of the habit of heavenly-mindedness in us, which ought to act and govern us in the whole course of our conversation, we should in all our devotions, with an eye of faith, look *heaven-wards*, and eye the God we pray to as our Father in heaven, that we may make the *upper world* more familiar to us, and may our selves become better prepared for the future state.

4. That in prayer, as well as in the tenor of our lives, we must *seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof*, by ascribing honour to his name, his *holy* name, and power to his government, both that of his providence in the world, and that of his grace in the church. O that both the one and the other may be more manifested, and we and others more manifestly brought into subjection to both!

5. That the *principles and practices* of the *upper world*, the *unseen world* (which therefore by *faith* only we are apprized of) are the *great original* (the *ἀρχέτυπον*) to which we should desire the principles and practices of this *lower world*, both in others and in ourselves may be more conformable. Those words, *As in heaven, so on earth*, refer to all the three first petitions; Father, let thy name be sanctified and glorified, and thy kingdom prevail, and thy will be done on this earth, that is now alienated from thy service, as it is in yonder heaven, that is entirely devoted to thy service.

6. That those who faithfully and sincerely mind the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, may humbly hope that *all other things*, as far as to infinite wisdom seems good, *shall be added to them*, and they may in faith pray for them. If our first and chief desire and care be that God's name may be sanctified, and his kingdom come, and his will be done, we may then come boldly to the throne of grace for our *daily bread*, which will then be sanctified to us when we are sanctified to God, and God is sanctified by us.

7. That in our prayers for temporal blessings we must *moderate* our desires, and confine them to a *competency*. The expression here used of *day by day*, is the very same with our *daily bread*, and therefore some think we must look for another signification of the word *ἐπιούσιος*, than that of *daily*, which we give it, and that it means our *necessary* bread; the bread that is *suited* to the cravings of our nature; the fruit that is brought out of the earth for our bodies that are made of the earth; and are earthly, *Psal. civ. 14.*

8. That sins are debts we are daily contracting, and which therefore we should every day pray for the forgiveness of. We are not only going behind of our rent every day, by *omissions* of duty, and in duty, but are daily incurring the penalty of the law, as well as the forfeiture of our bond, by our *commissions*; every day adds to the score of our guilt, and it is a miracle of mercy, that we have so much encouragement given us to come every day to the throne of grace, to pray for the pardon of our sins of daily infirmity. God *multiplies to pardon* beyond seventy times seven.

9. That we have no reason to expect, nor can with any confidence pray, that God would forgive our sins against him, if we do not *sincerely*, and from a truly Christian principle of *charity*, forgive those that have at any time affronted us, or been injurious to us. Though the *words of our mouth* be even this prayer to God, if the *meditation of our heart* at the same time be, as often as it is, malice and revenge to our brethren, we are not accepted, nor can we expect an answer of peace.

10. That temptations to sin should be as much dreaded and deprecated by us as ruin by sin; and it should be as much our care and prayer to get the power of sin broken in us, as to get the guilt of sin removed from us; and though temptation may be a charming, fawning, flattering thing, we must be as earnest with God that we may not be led into that, as that we may not be led by that to sin, and by sin to ruin.

Lastly, That God is to be depended upon, and sought unto for our deliverance *from all evil*; and we should pray not only that we may not be left to our selves to run into evil, but that we may not be left to Satan to bring evil upon us. Dr. Lightfoot understands it of being delivered *from the evil one*, that is, the devil, and suggests that we pray particularly against the apparitions of the devil and his possessions. The disciples were employed to *cast out devils*, and therefore were concerned to pray

that they might be guarded against the particular spite he would always be sure to have against them.

4. He stirs up and encourageth importunity, fervency, and constancy in prayer; by shewing,

1. That importunity will go far in our dealings with men, *ver. 5, 6, 7, 8.* Suppose a man, upon a sudden emergency, goes to borrow a loaf or two of bread of a neighbour, at an unreasonable time of night, not for himself, but for his friend that came unexpectedly to him: His neighbour will be loth to accommodate him, for he has wakened him with his knocking, and put him out of humour, and he has a great deal to say in his excuse; the door is shut and locked, his children are asleep, in bed in the same room with him, and if he make a noise he shall disturb them; his servants are asleep and he cannot make them hear; and for his own part, he shall catch cold if he riseth to give him; but his neighbour will have no nay, and therefore he continues knocking still, and tells him he will do so till he has what he comes for; so that he must give it him to be rid of him; *he will rise and give him as many as he needs, because of his importunity.* He speaks this parable with the same intent that he speaks that, *Luke xviii. 1.* That men ought always to pray and not to faint. Not that God can be wrought upon by importunity, we cannot be troublesome to him, nor by being so change his counsels: We prevail with men by importunity, because they are *displeased* with it, but with God, because he is *pleased* with it. Now this similitude may be of use to us,

(1.) To direct us in prayer. (1.) We must come to God with *boldness* and *confidence*, for what we need, as a man doth to the house of his neighbour or friend, who, he knows, loves him, and is inclined to be kind to him. (2.) We must come for *bread*, for that which is *needful*, and which we cannot be without. (3.) We must come to him by prayer *for others*, as well as *for ourselves*. This man did not come for bread for himself, but for his friend. The Lord *accepted Job* when he prayed for his friends, *Job xlii. 10.* We cannot come to God upon a more pleasing errand, than when we come to him for grace to enable us to do good, to *feed many with our lips*; to entertain and edify those that come to us. (4.) We may come with the more boldness to God in a strait, if it be a strait that we have not brought ourselves into by our own folly and carelessness, but providence has led us into it. This man would not have wanted bread if his friend had not come in *unexpectedly*. The care which providence casts upon us, we may with cheerfulness cast back upon providence. (5.) We ought to *continue instant* in prayer, and watch in the same with all perseverance.

(2.) To encourage us in prayer. If importunity could prevail thus with a man, that was angry at it, much more with a God, who is infinitely more kind and ready to do good to us than we are to one another, and is not angry at our importunity, but accepts it, especially when it is for spiritual mercies that we are importunate. If he do not answer our prayers presently, yet he will in due time, if we continue to pray.

2. That God hath promised to give us what we ask of him. We have not only the goodness of his nature to take comfort from, but the word which he hath spoken, *ver. 9, 10.* Ask, and it shall be given you; either the thing itself you shall ask, or that which is equivalent; either the thorn in the flesh removed, or grace sufficient given in. We had this before, *Matt. vii. 7, 8.* I say unto you. We have it from Christ's own mouth, who knows his Father's mind, and in whom all promises are yea and amen. We must not only *ask*, but we must *seek* in the use of means, must second our prayers with our endeavours: And in *asking* and *seeking*, we must continue *pressing*, still knocking at the same door, and we shall at length prevail, not only by our prayers in consort, but by our particular prayers, *every one that asketh receiveth*, even the meanest saint that asks in faith. *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, Psal. xxxiv. 6.* When we ask of God those things which Christ had just now directed us to ask, that his name may be sanctified, that his kingdom may come, and his will be done; in these requests we must be importunate, must *never hold our peace day or night*; we must not *keep silence*, nor *give God any rest*, until he *establish*, until he *make Jerusalem a praise on the earth*, *Isa. lxii. 6, 7.*

5. He gives us both instruction and encouragement in prayer, from the consideration of our relation to God as a father. Here is,

1. An appeal to the bowels of earthly fathers. Let any of you that is a father, and knows the heart of a father, a father's affection to a child, and care for a child, tell me if his son *ask bread* for his breakfast, *will he give him a stone* to breakfast on? *If he ask a fish* for his dinner (when it may be it is a fish day) *will he for a fish give him a serpent*, that will poison and sting him? Or, *if he shall ask an egg* for his supper, an egg and to bed, *will he offer him a scorpion*? You know you could not be so unnatural to your own children, *ver. 11, 12.*

2. An application of this to the blessings of our heavenly Father, *ver. 13.* If ye then being evil, give, and know how to give good gifts to your children, much more shall God give you the Spirit: He shall give good things; so it is in Matthew. Observe,



1. The *direction* he gives us, what to *pray for*; we must ask for the *Holy Spirit*, not only as necessary in order to our *praying well*, but as inclusive of all the good things we are to pray for, we need no more to make us happy, for the Spirit is the worker of spiritual life, and the earnest of eternal life. Note, The gift of the Holy Ghost is a gift we are every one of us concerned earnestly and constantly to pray for.

2. The *encouragement* he gives us to hope that we shall speed in this prayer; *your heavenly Father will give*. It is in his power to give the Spirit; he has all good things to bestow, wrapped up in that one; but that is not all, it is in his *promise*, the gift of the *Holy Ghost* is in the covenant, *Acts xxiii*. And it is here inferred from parents readiness to supply their childrens needs, and gratify their desires, when they are natural and proper. If the child ask for a *serpent* or a *scorpion*, the father in kindness denies him, but not if he asks for what is *needful* and will be *nourishing*. When God's children ask for the Spirit, they do in effect ask for *bread*, for the Spirit is the staff of life; nay, he is the author of the soul's life. If our earthly parents, though *evil*, be yet so kind; if they, though *weak*, be yet so *knowing*, that they not only give, but give with discretion, give what is best, in the best manner and time, much more shall your *heavenly Father*, who infinitely excels the fathers of our flesh both in wisdom and goodness, give you his *Holy Spirit*. If earthly parents are willing to lay out for the education of their children, to whom they design to leave their estates, much more will your heavenly Father give the spirit of sons to all those whom he has predestinated to the inheritance of sons.

14. ¶ And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake: and the people wondered. 15. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Belzebub, the chief of the devils. 16. And others tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. 17. But he knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation: and a house divided against a house, falleth. 18. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say, that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. 19. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. 20. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. 21. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace. 22. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. 23. He that is not with me, is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth. 24. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest: and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. 25. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. 26. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

The substance of these verses we had, *Matt. xii. 22.* and Christ is here giving a general proof of his divine mission, by a particular proof of his power over Satan; his conquest of whom, was an indication of his great design in coming into the world, which was to *destroy the works of the devil*; and an earnest of the success of that undertaking. He is here casting out a devil that made the poor possessed man *dumb*, in Matthew we are told that he was *blind and dumb*: And when the devil was forced out by the word of Christ, the *dumb* spake immediately, echoed to Christ's word, and the lips were opened to shew forth his praise. Now,

1. Some were *affected* with this miracle: The people *wondered*; they admired the power of God, and specially that it should be exerted by the hand of one who made so small a figure, that one who did the work of the Messiah should have so little of that pomp of the Messiah they expected.

2. Others were offended at it, and to justify their infidelity, suggested that it was by virtue of a league with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, that he did this, *ver. 15*. It seems, in the devil's kingdom there are chiefs, which supposeth that there are subalterns. Now they would have it *thought*, or *said* at least, that there was a correspondence settled between Christ and the devil, that the devil should have the advantage in the main, and be victorious at last, but that in order hereto, in particular instances, he should yield Christ the advantage, and retire by consent. And some, to corroborate this suggestion, and confront

the evidence of Christ's miraculous power, challenged him to give them a sign from heaven, *ver. 16*. to confirm his doctrine by some appearance in the clouds, such as was upon mount Sinai, when the law was given; as if a sign from heaven, not disprovable by any sagacity of theirs, could not have been given them as well by a compact and collusion with the prince of the power of the air, who works with power and lying wonders, as the casting out of a devil; nay, that would not have been any present prejudice to his interest, which this manifestly was. Note, Obstinate infidelity will never be to seek for something to say in its own excuse, though never so frivolous and absurd.

Now Christ here returns a full and direct answer to this cavil of theirs: In which he shews,

1. That it can by no means be imagined that such a subtil prince as Satan is, should ever give into measures that had such a direct tendency to his own overthrow, and the undermining of his own kingdom, *ver. 17, 18*. What they objected, they kept to themselves, afraid to speak it, lest it should be answered and baffled; but Jesus knew their thoughts, even when they industriously thought to conceal them; and he said, You yourselves cannot but see the groundlessness, and consequently the spitefulness, of this charge, for it is an allowed maxim, confirmed by every day's experience, that no interest can stand that is divided against itself; not the more publick interest of a kingdom; not the private interest of a house or family; if either the one or the other be divided against itself, it cannot stand. Satan would herein act against himself, not only by the miracle, which turned him out of possession of the bodies of people, but much more in the doctrine which the miracle was wrought for the explication and confirmation of, which had a direct tendency to the ruin of Satan's interest in the minds of men, by mortifying sin, and turning men to the service of God: Now if Satan should thus be divided against himself, he would hasten his own overthrow, which you cannot suppose an enemy to do, that acts so subtilly for his own establishment, and is so solicitous to have his kingdom stand.

2. That it was a very partial, ill-natured thing for them to impute that in him to a compact with Satan, which yet they applauded and admired in others that were of their own nation, *ver. 19*. By whom do your sons cast them out? Some of their own kindred, as Jews, nay, and some of their own followers, as Pharisees, have undertaken, in the name of the God of Israel, to cast out devils, and they were never charged with such a hellish combination as I am charged with. Note, It is gross hypocrisy to condemn that in those who reprove us, which yet we allow of in those that flatter us.

3. That in opposing the conviction of this miracle, they were enemies to themselves, stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door, for they thrust from them the kingdom of God, *ver. 20*. If I with the finger of God cast out devils, as you may assure yourselves I do, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you; the kingdom of the Messiah offers itself, and all its advantages to you, and if you receive it not, it is at your peril. In Matthew it is by the Spirit of God, here by the finger of God; the Spirit is the arm of the Lord, *Isa. liii. 1*. His most great and mighty works were wrought by his Spirit; but if the Spirit in this work is said to be the finger of the Lord, which perhaps may intimate how easily Christ did, and could, conquer Satan, even with the finger of God; the exerting of the divine power in a less and lower degree than in many other instances. He needed not make bare his everlasting arm, that roaring lion, when he pleaseth, is crushed like a moth with the touch of a finger. Perhaps here is an allusion to the acknowledgment of Pharaoh's magicians, when they were run aground, *Exod. viii. 19*. This is the finger of God. Now if the kingdom of God be herein come to you, and you be found by those cavils and blasphemies fighting against it, it will come upon you, as a victorious force which you cannot stand before.

4. That his casting out of devils was really the destroying of them and their power, for it confirmed a doctrine which had a direct tendency to the ruining of his kingdom, *ver. 21, 22*. perhaps there had been some who had cast out the inferior devils by compact with Beelzebub their chief; but that was without any real damage or prejudice to Satan and his kingdom; what he lost one way he gained another. The devil, and such exorcists, played booty, as we say, and while the forlorn hope of his army gave ground, the main body thereby gained ground; the interest of Satan in the souls of men was not weakened by it in the least. But when Christ cast out devils, he needed not do it by any compact with them, for he was stronger than they, and could do it by force, and did it so as to ruin Satan's power, and blast his great design by a doctrine and grace that breaks the power of sin, and so routs Satan's main body, takes from him all his armour, and divides his spoils, which no one devil ever did to another, or ever will. Now this is applicable to Christ's victories over Satan, both in the world, and in the hearts of particular persons, by that power which went along with the preaching of his gospel, and doth still. And so we may observe here,

1. The miserable condition of an unconverted sinner: In his heart, which was fitted to be a habitation of God, the devil has his palace, and all the powers and faculties of the soul being employed by him in the service of sin are his goods. Note, 1. The heart



heart of every unconverted sinner is the *devil's palace*, where he *resides*, and where he *rules*; he *works* in the *children of disobedience*. The heart is a *palace*, a noble dwelling; but the unsanctified heart is the *devil's palace*. His lusts are done, his interests are served, and the militia is in his hands; he *usurps* the throne in the soul. 2. The devil as a *strong man armed* keeps this palace, doth all he can to secure it to himself, and to fortify it against Christ. All the prejudices with which he hardens mens hearts against truth and holiness, are the *strong holds* which he erects for the *keeping of his palace*; this palace is his *garrison*. 3. There is a kind of *peace* in the palace of an unconverted soul, while the devil as a *strong man armed* keepeth it. The sinner has a good opinion of himself, is very secure, and merry, has no doubt concerning the goodness of his state, nor any dread of the judgment to come, he flatters himself in his own eyes, and cries peace to himself. Before Christ appeared all was quiet, because all *went one way*; but the preaching of the gospel disturbed the peace of the devil's palace.

2. The wonderful change that is made in conversion, which is Christ's victory over this usurper: *Satan is a strong man armed*; but our Lord Jesus is *stronger than he*, as God, as Mediator: *If we speak of strength, he is strong*: more are with us than against us.

Observe, 1. The manner of this victory. *He comes upon him* by surprise, when his *goods are in peace*, and the devil thinks it is all *his own* for ever, and *overcomes* him. Note, The conversion of a soul to God is Christ's victory over the devil, and his power in that soul, restoring the soul to its liberty, and recovering his own interest in it, and dominion over it.

2. The evidences of this victory. (1.) *He taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted*. The devil is a *confident* adversary, he *trusts* to his *armour*, as Pharaoh to his rivers, *Ezek. xxix.* 3. but Christ disarms him. When the power of sin and corruption in the soul is broken, when the mistakes are rectified, the eyes opened, the heart humbled and changed, and made serious and spiritual, then Satan's *armour* is *taken away*. (2.) *He divideth the spoils*; he *takes possession* of them for himself, all the endowments of mind or body, the estate, power, interest, which before were made use of in the service of sin and Satan, are now converted to Christ's service, and employed for him, yet that is not all, he *makes a distribution* of them among his followers, and having conquered Satan, gives to all believers the benefit of that victory.

Now from hence he infers, that seeing the whole drift of his doctrine and miracles was to break the power of the devil, that great enemy of mankind, it was the duty of all to join with him, and to follow his conduct, to receive his gospel, and come heartily into the interests of it, for otherwise they would justly be reckoned as siding with the enemy, *ver. 23. He that is not with me, is against me*. Those therefore who rejected the doctrine of Christ, and slighted his miracles, were looked upon as adversaries to him, and in the devil's interest.

5. That there was a vast difference between the devils going out by compact, and his being cast out by compulsion. Those out of whom Christ cast him, he never entered into again, for so was Christ's charge, *Mark. ix. 25*. Whereas if he had gone out whenever he saw fit, he would have made a re-entry, for that is the way of the unclean spirit, when he voluntarily and with design goes out of a man, *ver. 24, 25, 26*. The prince of the devils may give leave, nay, may give order to his forces to retreat, or make a feint, to draw the poor deluded soul into an *ambush*; but Christ as he gives a *total*, so he gives a *final* defeat to the enemy.

And in this part of the argument he has a further reach, which is to represent the state of those who have had fair offers made them, among whom, and in whom God has begun to break the devil's power, and overthrow his kingdom, but they reject his counsel against themselves, and relapse into a state of subjection to Satan. Here we have,

1. The condition of a *formal hypocrite*, his *bright side*, and his *dark side*; his heart still remains the *devil's house*, he calls it his own, and he retains his interest in it; and yet, (1.) The *unclean spirit is gone out*; he was not driven out by the power of converting grace, there was none of that *violence* which the kingdom of heaven suffers; but he *went out*, withdrew for a time, so that the man seems not to be under the power of Satan as formerly, nor so followed with his temptations; Satan is *gone*, or has *turned himself into an angel of light*. (2.) The house is swept from common pollutions, by a forced confession of sin, as Pharaoh's; a feigned contrition for it, as Ahab's; and a partial reformation, as Herod's: There are those that have *escaped the pollutions of the world*, and yet are still under the power of the *god of this world*, 2 Pet. ii. 20. The house is swept, but it is not washed, and Christ hath said, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me*; the house must be washed, or it is none of his. Sweeping takes off only the loose dirt, while the sin that besets the sinner, the beloved sin is untouched. It is swept from the filth that lies open to the eye of the world, but it is not searched and ransacked for secret filthiness, *Mat. xxiii. 25*. It is swept, but the *leprosy is in the wall*, and will be till something more be done. (3.) The house is garnished with common gifts and graces. It is not furnished

with any true grace, but garnished with the pictures of all graces: Simon Magus was garnished with faith; Balaam with good desires; Herod with a respect for John; the Pharisees with many external performances; it is garnished, but it is like a *polished covered with silver dross*, it is all paint and varnish, not real, not lasting. The house is garnished, but the property is not altered, it was never surrendered to Christ, nor inhabited by the Spirit. Let us therefore take heed of resting in that which a man may have, and yet come short.

2. Here is the condition of a *final apostate*, into whom the devil returns after he had gone out, *ver. 26. Then goes he and takes seven other spirits more wicked than himself*; a certain number for an uncertain, as *seven devils* are said to be cast out of Mary Magdalen; *seven wicked spirits* are opposed to the *seven spirits of God*, *Rev. iii. 1.* these are said to be more wicked than himself: It seems, even devils are not all alike wicked; probably the degrees of their wickedness now they are fallen, are as the degrees of their holiness were while they stood. When the devil would do mischief most effectually, he employs those that are more mischievous than himself. These enter in without any difficulty or opposition, they are welcomed, and they dwell there, there they work, there they rule, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Note, 1. Hypocrisy is the high rode to apostasy. If the heart remains in the interest of sin and Satan, the shews and shadows will come to nothing; those that have not set that right, will not long be steadfast; where secret haunts of sin are kept up under the cloke of a visible profession, conscience is debauched; God is provoked to withdraw his restraining grace, and the close hypocrite commonly proves an open apostate. 2. The last state of such is worse than the first, in respect both of sin and punishment. Apostates are usually the worst of men, the most vain and profligate, the most bold and daring, their consciences are seared, and their sins of all others the most aggravated. God often sets marks of his displeasure upon them in this world, and in the other world they will receive the greater damnation. Let us therefore hear and fear, and hold fast our integrity.

27. ¶ And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lift up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. 28. But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

We had not this passage in the other evangelists, nor can we tack it, as Dr. Hammond doth, to that of Christ's mother and brethren, desiring to speak with him, for this evangelist also had related that some time ago, *chap. viii. 19.* but it contains an interruption much like that, and, like that, occasion is taken from it for an instruction.

1. The applause which an affectionate honest well-meaning woman gave to our Lord Jesus, upon hearing his excellent discourses: While the scribes and Pharisees despised and blasphemed them, this good woman (and probably she was a person of some quality) admired them, and the wisdom and power with which he spake, *ver. 27. as he spake these things*, with a convincing force and evidence, a certain woman of the company was so pleased to hear how he had confounded the Pharisees, and conquered them, and put them to shame and cleared himself from their vile insinuations, that she could not forbear crying out, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee*. What an admirable, what an excellent man is this! surely never was there a greater or better born of a woman: happy the woman that hath him for her son. I should have thought myself very happy to be the mother of one that speaks as never man spake; that hath so much of the grace of heaven in him, and is so great a blessing to this earth. This was well said, as it expressed her high esteem of Christ, and that for the sake of his doctrine; and it was not amiss that it reflected honour upon the virgin Mary his mother, for it agreed with what she herself had said, *chap. i. 48. All generations shall call me blessed*; some even of this generation, as bad as it was. Note, To all that believe the word of Christ, the person of Christ is precious, and he is an honour, 1 Pet. ii. 7. Yet we must be careful, lest, as this good woman, we too much magnify the honour of his natural kindred, and so know him after the flesh, whereas we must now henceforth know him so no more.

2. The occasion which Christ took from thence to pronounce them more happy, who are his faithful and obedient followers than she was who bare and nursed him. He doth not deny what this woman said, nor refuse her respects to him and his mother, but leads her from this to that which was of a higher consideration, and which more concerned her, *Yea rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it*, *ver. 28.* He thinks them so, and his saying they are so, makes them so, and should make us of his mind. This is intended partly as a check to her, for doting so much upon his bodily presence, and his human nature, partly as an encouragement to her to hope that she might be as happy as his own mother, whose happiness she was ready to envy, if she would hear the word of God and keep it.

Note,



Note, Though it is a great privilege to hear the word of God, yet those only are truly blessed, that is, blessed of the Lord, that hear it and *keep it*; that keep it in memory, and keep to it as their way and rule.

29. ¶ And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign, and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. 30. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. 31. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 32. The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here. 33. No man when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel; but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. 34. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light: but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. 35. Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. 36. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

Christ's discourse in these verses shews two things:

1. What is the *sign* we may expect from God, for the confirmation of our faith: The great and most convincing proof of Christ's being sent of God, and which they were yet to wait for, after the many signs that had been given them was the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Here is,

1. A reproof to the people for demanding other signs than what had already been given them in great plenty, ver. 29. *The people were gathered thick together*, a vast crowd of them expecting not so much to have their consciences informed by the doctrine of Christ, as to have their curiosity gratified by his miracles: And Christ knew what brought such a multitude together, they came *seeking a sign*, they came to gaze, to have something to talk of when they came home; and it is an *evil generation* which nothing will awaken and convince, no not the most sensible demonstrations of divine power and goodness.

2. A promise that yet there should be *one sign* more given them different from any that had yet been given them, even the *sign of Jonas the prophet*, which in Matthew is explained, as meaning the resurrection of Christ. As Jonas being cast into the sea, and lying there three days, and then coming up alive, and preaching repentance to the Ninevites was a sign to them, upon which they turned from their evil way, so shall the death and resurrection of Christ and the preaching of his gospel immediately after to the Gentile world be the last warning to the Jewish nation; if they be provoked to a *holy jealousy* by that, well and good; but if that do not work upon them, let them look for nothing else but utter ruin. *The Son of man shall be a sign to this generation*, ver. 30. A sign, speaking to them, though a sign spoken against by them.

3. A warning to them to improve this sign, for it was at their peril if they did not.

1. *The queen of Sheba would rise up in judgment against them*, and condemn their unbelief, ver. 31. She was a stranger to the common-wealth of Israel, and yet so readily gave credit to the report she heard of the glories of a king of Israel, that notwithstanding the prejudices we are apt to conceive against foreigners, she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to *hear his wisdom*, not only to satisfy her curiosity, but to inform her mind, especially in the knowledge of the true God and his worship, which is upon record to her honour; and behold a *greater than Solomon is here*, πλεον Σολομων; more than a Solomon is here, that is, faith Dr. Hammond, more of wisdom, and more heavenly divine doctrine than ever was in all Solomon's words or writings; and yet these wretched Jews will give no manner of regard to what Christ saith to them, though he be in the midst of them.

2. The Ninevites would rise up in judgment against them, and condemn their impenitency, ver. 32. They repented at the preaching of Jonas, but here is preaching which far exceeds that of Jonas, is more powerful and awakening, and threatens a much sorer ruin than that of Nineveh; and yet none are startled by it to turn from their evil way, as the Ninevites did.

2. He shews what is the *sign* that God expects from us for the evidencing of our faith; and that is the serious practice of that

religion which we profess to believe, and a readiness to entertain all divine truths, when brought to us in their proper evidence. Now observe,

1. That they had *the light* with all the advantage they could desire: For God having *lighted the candle* of the gospel, did not put it in a *secret place*, or *under a bushel*; Christ did not preach in corners. The apostles were ordered to preach the gospel to every creature; and both in Christ and his ministers, wisdom and her maidens cry in the *chief places of concourse*, ver. 33. It is a great privilege that the light of the gospel is put on a *candlestick*, so that all that come in may *see it*, and may *see by it*, where they are, and whither they are going, and what is the true and sure and only way to happiness.

2. That having the *light*, their concern was to have the *light*, or else to what purpose had they the light. Be the *object* never so *clear*, if the *organ* be not *right*, we are never the better, ver. 34. *The light of the body is the eye*, which receives the light of the candle, when it is brought into the room: So the light of the soul is the understanding and judgment, and its power of discerning between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Now according as this is, accordingly the light of divine revelation is to us, and our benefit by it; accordingly it is a favour of life unto life, or of death unto death.

1. If this eye of the soul be *single*, if it see *clear*, see things as they are, and judge impartially concerning them, if it aim at *truth* only, and seek it for its own sake, and have not any sinister by-looks and intentions, the *whole body*, that is the whole soul is *full of light*, it receives and entertains the gospel, which will bring along with it into the soul both *knowledge* and *joy*; this speaks the same thing with that of the good ground *receiving the word*, and *understanding* it. If our understanding admit the gospel in its full light, it fills the soul, and it has enough to *fill* it. And if the soul be thus *filled* with the light of the gospel, *having no part dark*; if all its powers and faculties be subjected to the government and influence of the gospel, and none left unsanctified, then *the whole soul shall be full of light*, full of holiness and comfort; *it was darkness* itself, but is now light in the Lord, *as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light*, ver. 36. Note, The gospel will come into those souls, whose doors and windows are thrown open to receive it, and where it comes it will bring light with it. But,

2. If the *eye of the soul* be *evil*, if the judgment be *bribed* and *biased* by the corrupt and vicious dispositions of the mind, by pride and envy, by the love of the world and sensual pleasures; if the understanding be *prejudiced* against divine truths, and resolved not to admit them though brought with never so convincing an evidence, it is no wonder that the *whole body*, the whole soul, is *full of darkness*, ver. 34. How can they have instruction, information, direction, or comfort from the gospel, that wilfully shut their eyes against it, and what hope is there of such, what remedy for them? The inference from hence therefore is, ver. 35. *Take heed that the light which is in thee be not darkness*. Take heed that the eye of the mind be not blinded by partiality and prejudice, and sinful aims. Be sincere in your enquiries after truth, and ready to receive it in the light and love and power of it; and not as the men of *this generation* whom Christ preached to, that never sincerely desired to know God's will, or designed to do it, and therefore no wonder they *walked on in darkness*, wandered *endlessly*, and perished *eternally*.

37. ¶ And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in and sat down to meat. 38. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. 39. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter: but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. 40. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also? 41. But rather give alms of such things as you have: and behold, all things are clean unto you. 42. But woe unto you Pharisees: for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 43. Woe unto you Pharisees: for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. 44. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them, are not aware of them. 45. ¶ Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also. 46. And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers: for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be born, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. 47. Woe unto you: for ye build the sepulchres



sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres: 49. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: 50. That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51. From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation. 52. Wo unto you lawyers: for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered. 53. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: 54. Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

Christ here faith many of those things to a Pharisee and his guests, in a private conversation at table, which he afterwards said in a public discourse in the temple, *Matt. xxiii.* for what he said in public and private was of a piece. He would not say that in a corner, which he durst not repeat and stand to in the great congregation; nor would he give those reproofs to any sort of sinners in general, which he durst not apply to them in particular as he met with them, for he was and is the faithful witness. Here is,

First, Christ's going to dine with a Pharisee, that very civilly invited him to his house, *ver. 37.* As he spake, even while he was speaking, a certain Pharisee interrupted him with a request to him to come and dine with him, to come forthwith, for it was dinner time. We are willing to hope the Pharisee was so well pleased with his discourse, that he was willing to shew him respect, and desirous to have more of his company, and therefore gave him this invitation, and bid him truly welcome: and yet we have some cause to suspect, that it was with an ill design to break off his discourse to the people, and to have an opportunity of ensnaring him, and getting something out of him which might serve for matter of accusation or reproach, *ver. 53, 54.* We know not the mind of this Pharisee, but whatever it was Christ knew it: if he meant ill, he shall know Christ doth not fear him; if well, he shall know Christ is willing to do him good; so he went in and sat down to meat. Note, Christ's disciples must learn of him to be conversable, and not morose. Though we have need to be cautious what company we keep, yet we need not be rigid, nor must we therefore go out of the world.

Secondly, The offence which the Pharisee took at Christ, as those of that sort had sometimes done at the disciples of Christ for not washing before dinner, *ver. 38.* He wondered that a man of his sanctity, a prophet, a man of so much devotion, and such a strict conversation, would sit down to meat, and not first wash his hands, especially being newly come out of a mixt company, and there being in the Pharisee's dining-room, no doubt, all accommodations set ready for it; so that he need not fear being troublesome; and the Pharisee himself and all his guests, no doubt, washing, so that he could not be singular, what and yet not wash? what harm had it been if he had washed? Was it not strictly commanded by the canons of their church? it was so, and therefore Christ would not do it because he would witness against their assuming a power to impose that as a matter of religion which God commanded them not. The ceremonial law consisted in divers washings, but this was none of them, and therefore Christ would not practise it, no not in complaisance to the Pharisee who invited him, nor though he knew that offence would be taken at his omitting it.

Thirdly, The sharp reproof which Christ upon this occasion gave to the Pharisee without begging pardon even of the Pharisee, whose guest he now was; for we must not flatter our best friends in any evil thing.

1. He reproves them for placing religion so much in those instances of it that are only external, and fall under the eye of man, while those were not only postponed, but quite expunged which respect the soul, and fall under the eye of God, *ver. 39, 40.* Now observe here, (1.) The absurdity they were guilty of. You Pharisees make clean the outside only, you wash your hands with water, but do not wash your hearts from wickedness; those are full of covetousness and malice, covetousness of mens goods, and malice against good men. Those would never be reckoned cleanly servants, that wash only the outside of the cup their Master drinks out of, or the platter he eats out of, and take no care to make the inside clean, which immediately affects the meat and drink, and mingles it with it if there be any filth. The frame and temper of the mind in every religious service is the inside of the cup and platter, the impurity of that infects the services, and therefore to keep ourselves free from scandalous enormities, and yet to live under the dominion of spiritual wickedness, is as great

an affront to God, as it would be for a servant that gives the cup into his master's hand, clean wiped from all the dust on the outside, but within full of cobwebs and spiders. Ravening and wickedness, that is reigning worldliness and reigning spitefulness, which men think they can find some cloke and cover for, are the dangerous damning sins of many, who have made the outside of the cup clean from the more gross, and scandalous, and inexcusable sins of whoredom and drunkenness. (2.) A particular instance of the absurdity of it, *ver. 40.* Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also? Did not that God, who in the law of Moses appointed divers ceremonial washings, with which you justify yourselves in these practices and impositions, appoint also that you should cleanse and purify your hearts? He who made laws for that which is without, did not he, even in those laws, further intend something within? and by other laws shew, how little he regarded the purifying of the flesh, and the putting away of the filth of that, if the heart be not made clean? Or it may have regard to God, not only as a lawgiver, but (which the words seem rather to import) as a creator. Did not God who made us these bodies (and they are fearfully and wonderfully made) make us these souls also, which are more fearfully and more wonderfully made; now if he made both he justly expects we should take care of both; and therefore not only wash the body which he is the former of, and make the hands clean in honour of his work, but wash the spirit which he is the Father of, and get the leprosy in the heart cleansed.

To this he subjoins a rule for making of our creature-comforts clean to us, *ver. 41.* Instead of washing your hands before you go to meat, give alms of such things as you have, *τὰ ἐνὸς ἡμῶν*, of such things as are set before you, and present with you, let the poor have their share out of them, and then all things are clean to you, and you may use them comfortably. Here is a plain allusion to the law of Moses, by which it was provided that certain portions of the increase of their land should be given to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and when that was done, what was reserved for their own use was clean to them, and they could in faith pray for a blessing upon it, *Deut. xxvi. 12—15.* Then we can with comfort enjoy the gifts of God's bounty ourselves, when we send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared, *Neh. viii. 10.* Job eat not his morsel alone, but the fatherless eat thereof, and so it was clean to him, *Job xxxi. 17.* clean, that is, permitted and allowed to be used, and then only it can be used comfortably. Note, What we have is not our own, unless God have his dues out of it; and it is by liberality to the poor, that we clear up to ourselves our liberty to make use of our creature-comforts.

2. He reproves them for laying stress upon trifles, and neglecting the weighty matters of the law, *ver. 42.* (1.) Those laws which related only to the means of religion, they were very exact in the observance of, as particularly those concerning the maintenance of the priests, ye pay tithes of mint and rue, pay it in kind, and to the full, and will not put off the priests with a *modus decimandi*, or compound for it; by this they would gain a reputation with the people, as strict observers of the law, and would make an interest in the priests, in whose power it was many a time to do them a kindness: and no wonder if the priests and the Pharisees contrived how to strengthen one another's hands. Now Christ doth not condemn them for being so exact in paying tithes, these things ought ye to have done, but for thinking that that would atone for the neglect of their greater duties; for, (2.) Those laws which relate to the essentials of religion they made nothing of, ye pass over judgment and the love of God, you make no conscience of giving men their dues and God your hearts.

3. He reproves them for their pride and vanity, and affectation of precedency, and praise of men, *ver. 43.* Ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, or consistories where the elders met for government; if you have not those seats, you are ambitious of them, if you have, you are proud of them; and ye love greetings in the markets, to be complimented by the people, and to have their cap and knee. It is not fitting uppermost, or being greeted, that is reprov'd, but loving it.

4. He reproves them for their hypocrisy, and their colouring over the wickedness of their hearts and lives with specious pretences, *ver. 44.* ye are as graves overgrown with grass, which therefore appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them, and so they contract the ceremonial pollution which by the law arose from the touch of a grave. These Pharisees were within full of abominations, as a grave of putrefaction, full of covetousness, envy, and malice, and yet they concealed it so artfully, with a profession of devotion, that it did not appear, so that they who conversed with them and followed their doctrine, were defiled with sin, infected with their corruptions, and ill morals, and yet they making a shew of piety, suspected no danger by them. The contagion insinuated itself, and was insensibly caught, and those that caught it thought themselves never the worse.

Fourthly, The testimony which he bore also against the lawyers or scribes, who made it their business to expound the law according to the tradition of the elders, as the Pharisees did to observe the law according to that tradition.



1. There was one of that profession who repented what he said against the Pharisees; *ver. 45. Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also, for we are scribes; and are we therefore hypocrites?* Note, It is a common thing for unhumiliated sinners to call and count reproofs reproaches. It is the wisdom of those that desire to have their sin mortified, to make a *good use* of reproaches that come from *ill-will*, and to turn them into reproofs; if we can that way hear of our faults and amend them, it is well: but it is the folly of those who are wedded to their sins, and resolved not to part with them, to make an *ill use* of the faithful and friendly admonitions given them, which come from love, and to have their passions provoked by them, as if they were intended for *reproaches*, and therefore fly in the face of their reprovers, and justify themselves in rejecting the reproof. Thus the prophet complained, *Jer. vi. 10. The word of the Lord is to them a reproach, they have no delight in it.* This lawyer espoused the Pharisee's cause, and so made himself partaker of his sins.

2. Our Lord Jesus thereupon took them to task, *ver. 46. Wo unto you also, ye lawyers;* and again, *ver. 52. Wo unto you lawyers.* They blessed themselves in the reputation they had among the people, who thought them happy men because they studied the law, and were always conversant with that, and had the honour of instructing people in the knowledge of that, but Christ denounced *woes* against them, for he sees not as man sees. This was just upon him for taking the Pharisees part, and quarrelling with Christ, because he reproved them. Note, Those who quarrel with the reproofs of others, and suspect them to be reproaches to them, do but get *woes of their own* by so doing.

1. The lawyers are reproved for making the services of religion more *burthensome* to others, but more *easy* to themselves than God had made them. *Ver. 46. Ye lade men with burthens grievous to be born,* by your traditions, which *bind them out from many liberties* God has allowed them, and *bind them up to many slaveries* which God never enjoined them; to shew your authority, and to keep people in awe: but *ye yourselves touch them not with one of your fingers*, i. e. (1.) You will not *burthen* yourselves with them, nor be yourselves bound by those restraints with which you hamper others. They would seem, by the hedges they pretended to make about the law, to be very strict for the observance of the law, but if you could see their practices, you would find, not only that they make nothing of those hedges themselves, but make nothing of the law itself neither: thus the confessors of the Romish church, are said to do with their penitents. (2.) You will not *lighten* them to those you have power over; *you will not touch them*, that is, either to repeal them, or to dispense with them, when you find them to be burthensome and grievous to the people. They would come in with *both hands* to dispense with a command of God, but not with *a finger*, to mitigate the rigour of any of the traditions of the elders.

2. They are reproved for pretending a veneration for the memory of the prophets, whom their fathers killed, when yet they hated and persecuted those in their own day, who were sent to them on the same errand, to call them to repentance, and direct them to Christ, *ver. 47, 48, 49.*

(1.) These hypocrites among other pretences of piety *built the sepulchres of the prophets*, i. e. They erected monuments over their graves, in honour of them, probably with large inscriptions, containing high encomiums of them: they were not so superstitious as to enshrine their reliques, or to think the devotions the more acceptable to God, for their being paid at the *tombs of the martyrs*; they did not burn incense or pray to them, or plead their merits with God, they did not add that iniquity to their hypocrisy, but as if they owned themselves the *children of the prophets*, their heirs and executors, they *repaired and beautified* their monuments, sacred to their *pious memory*.

(2.) Notwithstanding this they had an inveterate enmity to those in their *own day*, that came to them in the *Spirit and power* of those prophets, and though they had not yet had an opportunity of carrying it far, yet they would soon do it, for the *wisdom of God said*, i. e. Christ himself would *so order it*, and did *now foretel it*, that they would *slay and persecute* the prophets and apostles that should be sent them: The *wisdom of God* would thus make trial of them, and discover their odious hypocrisy, by sending them prophets to reprove them for their sins, and warn them of the judgments of God. Those prophets should prove themselves apostles or messengers sent from heaven by signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost: or *I will send them prophets* under the title and title of apostles, who yet shall produce as good an authority as any of the old prophets did; and those they shall not only contradict and oppose, but *slay and persecute*, and put to death. Christ foresaw this, and yet did not otherwise than as became the *wisdom of God* in sending them, for he knew how to bring glory to himself in the issue, by the recompences reserved both for the *persecutors* and the *persecuted* in the future state.

(3.) That therefore God will justly put another construction upon their *building the tombs* of the prophets than what they would be thought to intend, and it shall be interpreted their *allowing the deeds of their fathers*, *ver. 45.* for since by their present actions it appeared they had no true value for their prophets, their *building their sepulchres* shall have this sense put upon it,

that they resolved to keep them in their graves, whom their fathers had hurried thither. Josiah that had a real value for prophets, thought it enough not to disturb the grave of the man of God at Bethel, *let no man move his bones*, 2 Kings xxiii. 17, 18. If these lawyers will carry the matter further, and will build their *sepulchres* it is such a piece of *over-doing*, as gives cause to suspect an ill design in it, and that it is meant as a cover for some design against prophecy itself, like the kiss of a traitor, as *be that blesteth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him*, Prov. xxvii. 14.

(4.) That they must expect no other, but to be reckoned with as the *fillers up* of the *measure* of persecution, *ver. 50, 51.* They keep up the trade as it were in succession, and therefore are responsible for the *debts of the company*, even those it has been in *contracting* all along, from the *blood of Abel* when the world began, to that of Zecharias, and so forward to the end of the Jewish state, it shall all be *required of this generation*, this last generation of the Jews, whose sin in persecuting Christ's apostles would exceed any of the sins of that kind that their fathers were guilty of, and so would bring *wrath* upon them *to the uttermost*, 1 Thes. ii. 15, 16. And their destruction by the Romans was so terrible as might well be reckoned the completing of God's vengeance upon that persecuting nation.

3. They are reproved for opposing the gospel of Christ, and doing all they could to obstruct the progress and success of it, *ver. 52.* (1.) They had not, according to the duty of their place, faithfully expounded to the people those scriptures of the Old Testament which pointed at the Messiah, which if they had been led into the right understanding of by the lawyers, they would readily have embraced him and his doctrine: but instead of that, they had perverted those texts, and had cast a mist before the eyes of the people by their corrupt glosses upon them, and this is called *taking away the key of knowledge*; instead of using that key for the people, and helping them to use it aright, they *hid it* from them; this is called in Matthew, *shutting up the kingdom of God against men*, Matt. xxiii. 13. Note, Those who take away the key of knowledge, shut up the *kingdom of heaven*. (2.) They themselves did not embrace the gospel of Christ though by their acquaintance with the Old Testament they could not but know that the *time was fulfilled*, and the *kingdom of God was at hand*; they saw the prophecies accomplished in that kingdom, which our Lord Jesus was about to set up, and yet would not themselves *enter into it*. Nay, (3.) Them that without any conduct or assistance of theirs were *entering in*, they did all they could to *hinder and discourage*, by threatening to *cast them out of the synagogue*, and otherwise terrifying them. It is bad for people to be *averse* to revelation, but much worse to be *adverse* to it.

Lastly, In the close of the chapter we are told, how spitefully and maliciously the scribes and Pharisees contrived to draw him into a snare, *ver. 53, 54.* They could not bear those cutting reproofs which they must own to be just, but since what he had said against them in particular, would not *bear an action*, nor could they ground upon it any *criminal* accusation, and therefore, as if because his reproofs were warm, they hoped to stir him up to some intemperate heat and passion, so as to put him off his guard; they *began to urge him vehemently*, to be very fierce upon him, and to *provoke him to speak of many things*, to propose dangerous questions to him, *laying wait* for something which might serve the design they had, of making him either *odious* to the people, or *obnoxious* to the government, or both. Thus did they seek occasion against him, like David's enemies, that did *every day wrest his words*, Psal. lvi. 5. *Evil men dig up mischief.* Note, Faithful reprovers of sin must expect to have many enemies, and have need to set a watch before the door of their lips, because of their *observers* that watch for their halting. The prophet complains of those in his time, who *make a man an offender for a word*, and *lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate*, Isa. xxix. 21. That we may bear trials of this kind with patience, and get through them with prudence, let us *consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself*.

## C H A P. XII.

In this chapter we have divers excellent discourses of our Saviour's, upon various occasions; many of which are to the same purpose with what we had in Matthew upon other the like occasions; for we may suppose our Lord Jesus preached the same doctrines, and pressed the same duties at several times, in several companies, and one of the evangelists took them as he delivered them at one time, and another at another time; and we need thus to have precept upon precept, line upon line. Here, (1.) Christ warns his disciples to take heed of hypocrisy, and of cowardise in professing Christianity and preaching the gospel, *ver. 1—12.* (2.) He gives a caution against covetousness, upon occasion of a covetous motion made to him, and illustrates that caution by a parable of a rich man suddenly cut off by death in the midst of his worldly projects and hopes, *ver. 13—21.* (3.) He encourageth



his disciples to cast all their care upon God, and to live easy in a dependence upon his providence, and engageth them to make religion their main business, ver. 22—34. (4.) He stirs them up to watchfulness for their Master's coming, from the consideration of the reward of those who are then found faithful, and the punishment of those who are found unfaithful, ver. 35—48. (5.) He bids them expect trouble and persecution, 49—53. 6. He warns the people to observe and improve the day of their opportunities, and to make their peace with God in time, ver. 54—59.

1. **I**N the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, in so much that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. 3. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light: and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops. 4. And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. 5. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. 6. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? 7. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows. 8. Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. 9. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God. 10. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven. 11. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: 12. For the holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour, what ye ought to say.

We find here, 1. A vast auditory that was got together to hear Christ preach. The scribes and Pharisees sought to accuse him, and do him mischief, but the people that were not under the bias of their prejudices and jealousies, still admired him, attended on him, and did him honour, ver. 1. In the mean time, while he was in the Pharisee's house, contending with them that sought to ensnare him, the people got together for an afternoon sermon; a sermon after dinner, after dinner with a Pharisee; and he would not disappoint them. Though in the morning sermon, when they were gathered thick together, chap. xi. 29. he had severely reprov'd them, as an evil generation that seek a sign, yet they renewed their attendance on him, so much better could the people bear their reproofs, than the Pharisees theirs. The more the Pharisees strove to drive the people from Christ, the more flocking there was to him. Here was an innumerable multitude of people gathered together, so that they trod one upon another in labouring to get foremost, and to come within hearing. It is a good sight to see people thus forward to hear the word, and venture upon inconvenience and danger, rather than miss an opportunity for their souls. Who are these that thus fly like the doves to their windows, Isa. lx. 8. When the net is cast where there is such a multitude of fish, it may be hoped that some will be inclosed.

2. The instructions which he gave his followers in the hearing of this auditory.

First, He began with a caution against hypocrisy. This he said to his disciples first of all; either to the twelve or the seventy. These were his more peculiar charge, his family, his school, and therefore he particularly warned them as his beloved sons; they made more a profession of religion than others, and hypocrisy in that was the sin they were most in danger of. They were to preach to others, and if they prevaricate, corrupt the word, and deal deceitfully, hypocrisy would be worse in them than in others. And besides, there was a Judas among them that was an hypocrite, and Christ knew it, and would hereby startle him, or leave him inexcusable. Christ's disciples were, for ought we know, the best men then in the world, yet need to be cautioned against hypocrisy. Christ said this to the disciples in the hearing of this great multitude, rather than privately when he had them by themselves, to add the greater weight to the caution, and to let the world know that he would not countenance hypocrisy, no, not in his own disciples.

Now observe,

1. The description of that sin which he warns them against, *It is the leaven of the Pharisees.* (1.) It is leaven, it is spreading as leaven, insinuates itself into the whole man, and all that it doth; it is swelling and souring as leaven, for it puffs men up with pride, and embitters them with malice, and makes their service unacceptable to God. (2.) It is the leaven of the Pharisees, i. e. it is the sin they are most of them found in. Take heed of imitating them; be not you of their spirit; do not you dissemble in Christianity as they do in Judaism; make not your religion a cloke of maliciousness, as they do theirs.

2. A good reason against it, ver. 2, 3. *For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed.* It is to no purpose to dissemble, for sooner or later truth will come out; and a lying tongue is but for a moment. If you speak in darkness that which is unbecoming you, and is inconsistent with your publick professions, it shall be heard in the light, some how or other it will be discovered, a bird of the air shall carry the voice, Eccl. x. 20. and your folly and falshood will be made manifest. The iniquity that is concealed with a shew of piety, will be discovered, perhaps, in this world, as Judas's was, and Simon Magus's, however, in the great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, Eccl. xii. 14. Rom. ii. 16. if men's religion prevail not to conquer and cure the wickedness of their hearts, it shall not always serve for a cloke. The day is coming, when hypocrites will be stripped of their fig-leaves.

Secondly, To this he added a charge to them, to be faithful to the trust reposed in them, and not to betray it through cowardise or base fear. Some make, ver. 2, 3. to be a caution to them not to conceal those things which they had been instructed in, and were employed to publish to the world. Whether men will bear, or whether they will forbear, tell them the truth; the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; what has been spoken to you, and you have talked of among yourselves privately and in corners, that do you preach publicly, whoever is offended; for if you please men you are not Christ's servants, nor can you please him, Gal. i. 10.

But this was not the worst of it; it was likely to be a suffering cause, though never a sinking one; let them therefore arm themselves with courage, and divers arguments here are to steel them with a holy resolution in their work. Consider,

1. The power of your enemies is a limited power, ver. 4. *I say unto you, my friends;* Christ's disciples are his friends, he calls them friends, and gives them this friendly advice, *Be not afraid;* do not disquiet yourselves with tormenting fears of the power and rage of men. Note, Those whom Christ owns for his friends need not be afraid of any enemies. *Be not afraid,* no, not of them that kill the body, let it not be in the power, not only not of scoffers, but not of murderers, to drive you off from your work, for you that have learned to triumph over death, may say, even of them, let them do their worst, after that there is no more that they can do; the immortal soul lives and is happy, and enjoys itself and its God, and sets them all at defiance. Note, Those can do Christ's disciples no real harm, and therefore ought not to be dreaded, who can but kill the body, for they only send that to its rest, and the soul to its joy the sooner.

2. God is to be feared more than the most powerful men, ver. 5. *I will forewarn you whom you shall fear;* that you may fear man less, fear God more; Moses conquers his fear of the wrath of the king, by having an eye to him that is invisible. By owning Christ you may incur the wrath of men, which can reach no further than to put you to death, and without God's permission they cannot do that; but by denying Christ and disowning him, you will incur the wrath of God, which has power to send you to hell, and there is no resisting it; now of two evils the least is to be chosen, and the greatest to be dreaded, and therefore *I say unto you, fear him.* It is true, said that blessed Martyr Bishop Hooper, life is sweet, and death bitter, but eternal life is more sweet, and eternal death more bitter.

3. The lives of good Christians and good ministers are the particular care of the divine providence, ver. 6, 7. To encourage us in times of difficulty and danger, we must have recourse to our first principles, and build upon them; now a firm belief of the doctrine of God's universal providence, and the extent of it would be satisfying to us, when at any time we are in peril, and encourage us to trust God in the way of duty. (1.) Providence takes cognizance of the meanest creatures; even of the sparrows. Though they are of such small account that five of them are sold for two farthings, yet not one of them is forgotten of God, but is provided for, and notice is taken of its death. Now, ye are of more value than many sparrows, and therefore you may be sure you are not forgotten, though imprisoned, though banished, though forgotten by your friends; much more precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of saints than the death of sparrows. (2.) Providence takes cognizance of the meanest interest of the disciples of Christ, ver. 7. even the very hairs of your head are all numbred, much more are your sighs and tears numbred, and the drops of your blood you shed for Christ's name sake. An account is kept of all your losses, that they may be, and without doubt they shall be recompensed unspeakably to your advantage.

4. You



4. You will be owned or disowned by Christ in the great day, according as you now own or disown him, *ver. 8, 9.* (1.) To engage us to *confess Christ before men*, whatever we may lose or suffer for our constancy to him, and how dear soever it may cost us, we are assured, that they who *confess Christ* now, shall be owned by him in the great day *before the angels of God*, to their everlasting comfort and honour. Jesus Christ will *confess* not only that he suffered for them, and they are to have the benefit of his sufferings, but that they suffered *for him*; and his kingdom and interest on earth was advanced by *their* sufferings, and what greater honour can be done them? (2.) To deter us from *denying Christ*, and a cowardly *deserting* of his truths and ways, we are here assured, that those who *deny Christ*, and treacherously depart from him, whatever they may save by it, though it were life itself, and whatever they may *gain* by it, though it were a kingdom, will be vast losers at last, for they shall be *denied before the angels of God*; Christ will not know them; will not own them; will not shew them any favour; which will turn to their everlasting terror and contempt. By the stress here laid upon their being *confessed* or *denied before the angels of God*, it should seem to be a considerable part of the happiness of glorified saints, that they will not only stand *right*, but stand *high* in the esteem of the *holy angels*; they will love them and honour them, and own them, if they be Christ's servants, they are their fellow-servants, and they will take them for their companions: And on the contrary, a considerable part of the misery of damned sinners will be, that the holy angels will abandon them, and will be the pleased witnesses not only of their disgrace as here, but of their misery, for they shall be *tormented in the presence of the holy angels*, *Rev. xiv. 10.* who will give them no relief.

5. The errand they were shortly to be sent out upon, was of the highest and last importance to the children of men, to whom they were sent, *ver. 10.* Let them be bold in preaching the gospel, for a sorer and heavier doom would attend those that rejected them, after the Spirit was poured out upon them, which was to be the *last* method of conviction, than those that now rejected Christ himself, and opposed him. *Greater works than these shall ye do*, and consequently greater will be the punishment of those that blaspheme the gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost in you. *Whoever shall speak a word against the Son of man*, that shall stumble at the meanness of his appearance, and speak *slightly* and *spitefully* of him, it is capable of some excuse; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* But unto him that *blasphemeth the Holy Ghost*, that blasphemes the Christian doctrine, and maliciously opposeth it, after the pouring out of the Spirit, and his attestation of Christ's *being glorified*, *Acts ii. 33.* — *v. 32.* the privilege of the *forgiveness of sin* shall be denied, he shall have no benefit by Christ and his gospel; you may shake off the dust of your feet against those that do so, and give them over as incurable: They have forfeited that *repentance* and *remission* which Christ was *exalted to give*, and which you are *commissioned to preach*. The sin, no doubt, was the more daring, and consequently the case the more desperate, during the continuance of the *extraordinary* gifts and operations of the Spirit in the church, which were intended for a *sign to them who believed not*, *1 Cor. xiv. 22.* Those, who though they were not convinced by them at first, yet admired them, there were hopes of, but those who *blasphemed* them were given over.

6. Whatever *trials* they should be called out to, they should be sufficiently *furnished* for them, and honourably brought through them, *ver. 11, 12.* The faithful martyr for Christ has not only *sufferings* to undergo, but a *testimony* to bear, a *good confession* to witness, and is concerned to do that *well*, so as that the cause of Christ may not suffer, though he suffer for it: And if this be his care, let him cast it upon God, when they *bring you unto the synagogues*, before church-rulers, before the Jewish courts, or before *magistrates and powers*; Gentile rulers, rulers in the state, to be examined about your doctrine, what it is, and what the proof of it; *Take no thought what ye shall answer*, (1.) That you may *save yourselves*: Do not study by what art or rhetoric to mollify your judges, or by what tricks in law to bring yourselves off; if it be the will of God that you should come off, and your time is not yet come, he will bring it about effectually. (2.) That you may *serve your Master*, aim at this, but do not perplex yourselves about it, for *the Holy Ghost*, as a Spirit of wisdom, *shall teach you what ye ought to say*, and how to say it, so as it may be for the honour of God and his cause.

13. ¶ And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. 14. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you? 15. And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. 16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. 17. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18. And he said,

This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? 21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.

We have in these verses,

First, The *application* that was made to Christ very *unseasonably*, by one of his hearers, desiring him to interpose *between him and his brother*, in a matter that concerned the estate of the family, *ver. 9.* Master, speak to my brother; speak as a prophet, speak as a king, speak with authority, he is one that will have a regard to what thou sayest; speak to him *that he divide the inheritance with me*. Now,

1. Some think his brother *did him wrong*, and he appeals to Christ to *right him*, because he knew the law was costly. His brother was such a one as the Jews called Ben-hamtsen, a *son of violence*, that took not only his own part of the estate, but his brother's too, and forcibly detained it from him. Such brethren there are in the world, that have no sense at all, either of *natural equity* or *natural affection*, who make a prey of those whom they ought to patronize and protect. They who are so wronged have a God to go to, who will *execute* judgment and justice for *those that are oppressed*.

2. Others think he had a mind to *do his brother wrong*, and would have Christ to *assist him*; that whereas the law gave the elder brother a double portion of the estate, and the father himself could not dispose of what he had, but by that rule, *Deut. xxi. 16, 17.* he would have Christ to *alter that law*, [and to oblige his brother, who perhaps was a follower of Christ at large, to *divide the inheritance* equally *with him*, in gavel-kind, share and share like, and to allot him as much as his elder brother: I suspect that this was the case, because Christ takes occasion from it to warn against *covetousness*, *πλεονεξία*. A desire of *having more*, more than God in his providence has allotted us. It was not a lawful desire of getting his own, but a *sinful* desire of getting more than his own.

Secondly, Christ's refusal to interpose in this matter, *ver. 14.* Man, who made me a judge, or divider over you? In matters of this nature, Christ would not assume either a *legislative* power, to alter the settled rule of inheritances, or a *judicial* power to determine controversies concerning them; he could have done the judge's part, and the lawyer's, as well as he did the physician's, and have ended suits at law as happily as he did diseases, but he would not, for it was not in his commission, *who made me a judge?* Probably he refers to the indignity done to Moses by his brethren in Egypt, which Stephen upbraided the Jews with, *Acts vii. 27, 35.* If I should offer to do this, you would taunt me as you did Moses, *Who made thee a judge, or a divider?* He corrects the man's mistake, will not admit his appeal, it was *coram non judice*, and so *dismisseth* his bill. If he had come to him to desire him to assist his pursuits of the heavenly inheritance, Christ would have given him his best help, but as to this matter, he has nothing to do, *who made me a judge?* Note, Jesus Christ was no usurper, he took no honour, no power to himself, but what was given him, *Heb. v. 5.* Whatever he did he could tell by what authority he did it, and who gave him that authority.

Now this shews us what is the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom; it is a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world. (1.) It doth not *interfere* with civil powers, nor take the authority of princes out of their hands: Christianity leaves the matter as it found it, as to civil power. (2.) It doth not intermeddle with civil rights; it obligeth all to do justly, according to the settled rules of equity, but dominion is not founded in grace. (3.) It doth not *encourage* our *expectations* of worldly advantages by our religion. If this man will be a disciple of Christ, and expects that in consideration of that Christ should give him his brother's estate, he is mistaken; the rewards of Christ's disciples are of another nature. (4.) It doth not *encourage* our *contests* with our brethren, and our being rigorous and high in our demands, but rather for peace sake to recede from our right. (5.) It doth not allow ministers to *entangle* themselves in the affairs of this *life*, *2 Tim. iii. 4.* to *leave the word of God to serve tables*. There are those whose business it is, let it be left to them, *Traçtent fabrilia fabri*.

Thirdly, The necessary caution which Christ took occasion from hence to give to his hearers. Though he came not to be a *divider* of mens estates, he came to be a director of their consciences about them, and would have all take heed of harbouring that corrupt principle, which they saw to be in others the *root of so much evil*. Here is,

1. The caution itself, *ver. 15.* Take heed and beware of *covetousness*, *ὀφθαλμοφιλία*. *Observe yourselves*, keep a *jealous eye* upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles steal into them, and *φυλάσσετε*, *preserve yourselves*, keep a *strict hand* upon your own hearts,



hearts, left covetous principles rule and give law in them. Covetousness is a sin which we have need constantly to watch against, and therefore frequently to be warned against.

2. The reason of it, or an argument to enforce this caution: For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, i. e. Our happiness and comfort doth not depend upon our having a great deal of the wealth of this world. (1.) The life of the soul, to be sure, doth not depend upon it, and the soul is the man. The things of the world will not suit the nature of a soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy its desires, nor last so long as it will last. Nay, (2.) Even the life of the body, and the happiness of that, doth not consist in an abundance of these things, for many live very contentedly, and easily, and get thro' the world very comfortably, that have but a little of the wealth of it; a dinner of herbs with holy love, is better than a feast of fat things: And, on the other hand, many live very miserably, that have a great deal of the things of this world, they possess abundance, and yet have no comfort of it; they bereave their souls of good, Eccl. iv. 8. Many that have abundance, are discontented and fretting, as Ahab and Haman, and then what good doth their abundance to them?

3. The illustration of this by a parable: The sum of which is to shew the folly of carnal worldlings while they live, and their misery when they die, which is intended, not only for a check to that man who came to Christ, with an address about his estate, while he was in no care about his soul and another world; but for the enforcing of that necessary caution to us all, to take heed of covetousness. The parable gives us the life and death of a rich man, and leaves us to judge whether he was a happy man.

1. Here is an account of his worldly wealth and abundance, ver. 16. The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, *χάος, regio*. He had a whole country to himself, a lordship of his own; he was a little prince. Observe, His wealth lay much in the fruits of the earth, for the king himself is served of the field, Eccl. i. 9. He had a great deal of ground, and his ground was fruitful; much would have more, and he had more. Note, The fruitfulness of the earth is a great blessing, but it is a blessing which God often gives plentifully to wicked men, to whom it is a snare, that we may not think to judge of his love or hatred, by what is before us.

2. Here are the workings of his heart in the midst of this abundance. We are here told what he thought within himself, ver. 17. Note, The God of heaven knows and observes, whatever we think within ourselves, and we are accountable to him for it: He is both a discerner and judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We mistake, if we imagine thoughts are hid, and thoughts are free.

Let us here observe,

1. What his cares and concerns were. When he saw an extraordinary crop upon his ground, instead of thanking God for it, or rejoicing in the opportunity it would give him of doing the more good, he afflicts himself with this thought, *what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?* He speaks as one at a loss, and full of perplexity. *What shall I do now?* The poorest beggar in the country, that did not know where to have a meal's meat, could not have said a more anxious word. Disturbing care is the common fruit of an abundance of this world, and the common fault of those that have abundance. The more men have, the more perplexity they have with it, and the more solicitous they are to keep what they have, and to add to it, how to spare, and how to spend, so that even the abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep, for thinking what they shall do with what they have, and how they shall dispose of it. The rich man seems to speak it with a sigh, *What shall I do?* And if you ask, why, what is the matter? Truly he has abundance of wealth, and wants a place to put it in; that is all.

2. What his projects and purposes were, which were the result of his cares, and were indeed absurd and foolish like them, ver. 18. *This will I do*, and it is the wisest course I can take, *I will pull down my barns*, for they are too little, and *I will build greater*, and *there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods*, and then I shall be at ease. Now here, (1.) It was folly for him to call the fruits of his ground his fruits, and his goods: He seems to lay a pleasing emphasis upon that, *my fruits*, and *my goods*; whereas, what we have is but lent us for our use, the property is still in God; we are but stewards of our Lord's goods, tenants at will of our Lord's land. It is *my corn* (saith God) and *my wine*, Is. ii. 8, 9. (2.) It was folly for him to hoard up what he had, and then to think it well bestowed. There will I bestow it all; if none must be bestowed upon the poor, none upon his family, none upon the Levite and the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, but all in the great barn. (3.) It was folly for him to let his mind rise with his condition, when his ground brought forth more plentifully than usual, then to talk of bigger barns, if the next year must needs be as fruitful as this, and much more abundant, whereas the barn might be as much too big the next year, as it was too little this: Years of famine commonly follow years of plenty, as they did in Egypt; and therefore he had better to have stacked some of his corn this once. (4.) It was folly for him to think to ease his care by building new barns, the building of them would but increase his care, those know

that, who know any thing of the spirit of building: The way that God prescribes for the cure of inordinate care, is certainly successful, but the way of the world doth but increase it. And besides, when he had done this, there were other cares would still attend him; the greater the barns, still the greater the cares, Eccl. v. 10. (5.) It was folly for him to contrive and resolve all this absolutely, and without reserve. This *I will do*, *I will pull down my barns*, and *I will build greater*, yea, that *I will*, without so much as that necessary proviso, *If the Lord will*, *I shall live*, Jam. iv. 13, 14. Peremptory projects are foolish projects, for our times are in God's hand, and not in our own; and we do not so much as know what shall be on the morrow.

3. What his pleasing hopes and expectations were, when he had made good those projects: Then *I will say to my soul*, upon the credit of this security, whether God say it or no, *Soul*, mark what I say, *thou hast much goods laid up for many years*, in these barns: Now take thine ease, enjoy thyself, eat, drink, and be merry, ver. 19. and here also appears his folly, as much in the enjoyment of his wealth, as in the pursuit of it. (1.) It was folly for him to put off his comfort in his abundance, till he had compassed his projects concerning it. When he has built bigger barns and filled them, which will be a work of time, then he will take his ease, and might he not as well have done that now? Grotius here quotes the story of Pyrrhus, that was projecting to make himself master of Sicily, Africa, and other places, in the prosecution of his victories; well, saith his friend Cyneas, and what must we do then? *Postea vivemus*, saith he; Then we will live; *at hoc jam licet*, saith Cyneas, we may live now if we please. (2.) It was folly for him to be confident that his goods were laid up for many years; as if his bigger barns would be safer than those he had; whereas, in an hour's time they might be burnt to the ground, perhaps by lightning, which there is no defence against, and all that was laid up in them. A few years may make a great change; *moth and rust may corrupt*, or *thieves break through and steal*. (3.) It was folly for him to count upon certain ease, when he had laid up abundance of the wealth of this world, whereas there are many things that may make people uneasy in the midst of their greatest abundance: One dead fly may spoil a whole pot of precious ointment; and one thorn a whole bed of down. Pain and sickness of body, disagreeableness of relations, and especially a guilty conscience, may rob a man of his ease, that has never so much of the wealth of this world. (4.) It was folly for him to think of making no other use of his plenty, but to eat and drink and to be merry; to indulge the flesh, and gratify the sensual appetite, without any thought of doing good to others, and being put thereby into a better capacity of serving God and his generation. As if we did live to eat, and not eat to live, and the happiness of man consisted in nothing else, but in having all the gratifications of sense wound up to the height of pleasurable-ness. (5.) It was the greatest folly of all, to say all this to his soul. If he had said, *Body*, take thine ease, for thou hast goods laid up for many years, there had been sense in it; but the soul, considered as an immortal spirit, separable from the body, was no way interested in a barn full of corn, or a bag full of gold. If he had had the soul of a swine, he might have blessed it with the satisfaction of eating and drinking; but what is this to the soul of a man, that has exigencies and desires which these things will be no ways suited to. It is the great absurdity which the children of this world are guilty of, that they portion their souls in the wealth of the world, and the pleasures of sense.

3. Here is God's sentence upon all this; and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. He said to himself, said to his soul, *Take thine ease*; and if God had said so too, the man had been happy, as his Spirit witnesseth with the spirit of believers, to make them easy, but God said quite otherwise; and by his judgment of us we must stand or fall, not by ours of ourselves, 2 Cor. x. His neighbours blessed him, Psal. x. 3. praised him as doing well for himself, Psal. xlv. 18. but God said he did ill for himself, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*, ver. 20. God said to him, i. e. decreed this concerning him, and let him know it, either by his conscience or by some awakening providence, or rather by both together. This was said, when he was in the fulness of his sufficiency, Job xx. 22. when his eyes were held waking upon his bed with his cares and contrivances about enlarging his barns, not by adding a bay or two more of building to them, which might serve to answer the end, but by pulling them down and building greater, which was requisite to please his fancy: When he was forecasting this, and had brought it to an issue, and then lulled himself asleep again, with a pleasing dream of many years enjoyment of his present improvements, then God said this to him: Thus Belshazzar was struck with terror by the hand-writing on the wall in the midst of his jollity. Now observe what God said, (1.) The character he gave him, *Thou fool*, thou Nabal, alluding to the story of Nabal, that fool; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him, whose heart was struck dead as a stone, when he was regaling himself in his abundance of his provision for his sheep-shearers. Note, Carnal worldlings are fools, and the day is coming when God will call them by their own name, *thou fool*, and they will call themselves so. (2.) The sentence he passed upon him, a sentence of death; *This night thy soul shall be required of thee*; they



shall require thy soul, so the words are, and then *whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* He thought he had goods that should be his many years, but he must part from them *this night*: he thought he should enjoy them himself, but he must leave them to he knows not who. Note, The death of carnal worldlings is miserable in itself, and terrible to them.

1. It is a *force*, an *arrest*, it is the *requiring of the soul*, that soul that thou art making such a fool of; what hast thou to do with a soul that canst use it no better? Thy soul shall be *required*; that intimates that he is loth to part with it. A good man that has taken his heart off from this world cheerfully resigns his soul at death, and gives it up; but a worldly man has it *torn* from him with violence, it is a terror to him to think of leaving this world. *They shall require thy soul*; God shall require it, *i. e.* he shall require an account of it; man, woman, what hast thou done with thy soul? give an account of that stewardship. *They shall*, *i. e.* Evil angels, as the messengers of God's justice. As good angels receive gracious souls, to carry them to their joy, so evil angels receive wicked souls to carry them to the place of torment; they shall *require it*, as a guilty soul to be punished. The devil requires the soul as his own, for it did in effect give itself to him.

2. It is a *surprise*, an *unexpected force*. It is in *the night*, and terrors in the night are most terrible. The time of death is day-time to a good man, it is his morning; but it is night to a worldling, a dark night, he *lies down in sorrow*. It is *this night*, this *present night* without delay, there is no giving bail, or begging day; this *pleasant night*, when thou art promising thyself many years to come, now thou must die and go to judgment: thou art entertaining thyself with the fancy of many a merry day, and merry night, and merry feast, but in the midst of all, here is an end of all, *Isa. xxi. 4.*

3. It is the leaving of all *those things behind which they have provided*, which they have laboured for, and prepared for hereafter, with abundance of toil and care. All that which they have placed their happiness in, and built their hope upon, and raised their expectations from, they must leave behind: *Their pomp shall not descend after them*, *Psal. xlv. 17.* but they shall go as naked out of the world, as they came into it, and they shall have no benefit at all, but what they have hoarded up, either in death, in judgment, or in their everlasting state.

4. It is leaving them to they *know not who*. Then *whose shall those things be?* Not *thine* to be sure, and thou knowest not what they will prove, for whom thou didst design them, thy children and relations, whether they will be *wise*, or *fools*, *Eccl. ii. 18, 19.* whether such as will bless thy memory, or curse it, be a credit to thy family, or a blemish; do good or hurt with what thou leavest them, keep it, or spend it; nay, thou knowest not but those for whom thou dost design it, may be prevented from the enjoyment of it, and it may be turned to some body else thou little thinkest of: Nay, though thou knowest to whom thou leavest it, thou knowest not to whom they will leave it, nor into whose hand it will come at last. If many a man could have foreseen to whom his house would have come after his death, he would rather have burned it, than beautified it.

5. It is a demonstration of his folly. Carnal worldlings are *fools* while they live; *this their way is their folly*, *Psal. xlix. 13.* but their folly is made most evident when they die, *at his end he shall be a fool*, *Jer. xvii. 11.* for then it will appear he took pains to lay up treasure in a world he was hastening from, but took no care to lay it up in the world he was hastening to.

Lastly, Here is the reddition of this parable, *ver. 21. so is he*, such a fool, a fool in God's judgment, a fool upon record, that *layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God*. This is the way, and this the end of such a man. Observe here,

1. The description of a worldly man. He *lays up treasure for himself*, for the body, for the world, for *himself*, in opposition to God, for that *self*, that is to be *denied*. (1.) It is his error that he counts his *flesh himself*, as if the *body* were the *man*. If *self* be rightly stated and understood, it is only the true Christian that lays up treasure for himself, and is *wise for himself*, *Prov. ix. 12.* (2.) It is his error, that he makes it his business to *lay up for the flesh*, which he calls laying up *for himself*. All his labour is *for his mouth*, *Eccl. vi. 7. making provision for the flesh*. (3.) It is his error, that he counts those things his *treasure*, which are thus *laid up* for the world and the body, and the life that now is; they are the wealth he trusts to, and spends upon, and lets out his affections towards. (4.) The greatest error of all is, that he is in no care to be *rich towards God*, rich in the *account of God*, whose accompting us rich, makes us so, *Rev. ii. 9.* rich in the *things of God*, rich in *faith*, *Jam. ii. 5.* rich in *good works*, in the *fruits of righteousness*, *1 Tim. vi. 18.* rich in *graces*, and *comforts*, and *spiritual gifts*. Many that have abundance of this world, are wholly destitute of that which will enrich their souls, which will make them rich towards God, rich for eternity.

2. The folly and misery of a worldly man; *so is he*: Our Lord Jesus Christ, who knows what the end of things will be, has here told us what his end will be. Note, It is the unspeakable folly of the most of men, to mind and pursue the wealth of this world, more than the wealth of the other world, that which

is for the body only, and for time, more than that which is for the soul and eternity.

22. ¶ And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. 23. The life is more than meat, and the body is *more* than raiment. 24. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have store-house nor barn; and God feedeth them: How much more are ye better than the fowls? 25. And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? 26. If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? 27. Consider the lilies how they grow: They toil not, they spin not: and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven: how much more *will he clothe* you, O ye of little faith? 29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. 30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. 31. ¶ But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. 32. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Fathers good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33. Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. 34. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 35. Let your loins be girded about, and *your* lights burning? 36. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. 37. Blessed *are* those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. 38. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants. 39. And this know, that if the good-man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. 40. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Our Lord Jesus is here inculcating some needful, useful lessons upon his disciples, which he had before taught them, and had occasion afterwards to press upon them; for they need to have *precept upon precept, and line upon line*: Therefore, because there are so many that are ruined by covetousness, and an inordinate affection, to the wealth of this world, I say unto you, my disciples, take heed of it: *Thou, O man of God, flee these things*, as well as thou, O man of the world, *1 Tim. vi. 11.*

First, He chargeth them not to afflict themselves with disquieting, perplexing cares, about the necessary supports of life, *ver. 22. Take no thought for your life*. In the foregoing parable he had given us warning against that branch of covetousness, which rich people are most in danger of, and that is a *sensual complacency* in the abundance of this world's goods. Now his disciples might think they were in no danger of that, for they had no plenty or variety to glory in; and therefore he here warns them against another branch of covetousness, which they are most in temptation to, that have but a little of this world, which was the case of the disciples at best, and much more now, they had left all to follow Christ; and that was an *anxious solicitude* about the necessary supports of life. *Take no thought for your life*, either for the preservation of it, if it be in danger, or for the provision that is to be made for it, either of food or clothing, *what ye shall eat, or what ye shall put on*. This is the caution he had largely insisted upon, *Matt. vi. 25, &c.* And the arguments here used are much the same, designed for our encouragement, to cast all our care upon God, which is the *right way* to ease ourselves of it. Consider then,

1. God that has done the greater for us, may be depended upon to do the lesser: He hath, without any care or forecast of our own, given us *life* and a *body*, and therefore we may cheerfully leave it to him to provide *meat* for the support of that life, and *raiment* for the defence of that body.



2. God that provides for the inferior creatures may be depended upon to provide for good Christians. Trust God for *meat*, for he feeds the ravens, ver. 24. they neither sow nor reap, they take neither care nor pains beforehand to provide for themselves, and yet they are fed, and never perish for want: Now consider how much better ye are than the fowls, than the ravens: Trust God for clothing, for he clothes the lilies, ver. 27, 28. they make no preparation for their own clothing, they toil not, they spin not, the root in the ground is a naked thing, and without ornament, and yet as the flower grows up, it appears wonderfully beautified: Now, if God has so clothed the flowers, which are fading perishing things, shall he not much more clothe you with such clothing as is fit for you, and with clothing suited to your nature as theirs is? When God fed Israel with *manna* in the wilderness, he also took care for their clothing; for though he did not furnish them with new clothes, yet (which came all to one) he provided that those they had should not wax old upon them, Deut. viii. 4. Thus will he clothe his spiritual Israel, but then let not them be of little faith. Note, Our inordinate cares are owing to the weakness of our faith, for a powerful, practical belief of the all-sufficiency of God, his covenant-relation to us, as a father, and especially his precious promises, relating both to this life and that to come, would be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strongholds of these disquieting, perplexing imaginations.

3. Our cares are fruitless and vain, and insignificant, and therefore it is folly to indulge them; they will not gain us our wishes, and therefore ought not to hinder our repose, ver. 25. Which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? no, nor one inch; can add to his age one year? no, nor one hour. Now if ye be not able to do that which is least, if it be not in your power to alter statures, why should you perplex yourselves about other things that are as much out of your power, and about which it is as necessary that we refer ourselves to the providence of God? Note, As in our *stature*, so in our *state*; it is our wisdom to take it as it is, and make the best of it, for fretting and vexing, carking and caring will not mend it.

4. An inordinate, solicitous pursuit of the things of this world, even necessary things, doth very ill become the disciples of Christ, ver. 29, 30. Whatever others do, seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; do not ye afflict yourselves with perplexing cares, nor weary yourselves with constant toils; do not you hurry hither and thither with enquiries what you shall eat or drink, as David's enemies, that wandered up and down for meat, Psal. lix. 15. or as the eagle that seeks the prey afar off, Job xxxix. 29. Let not the disciples of Christ thus seek their food, but ask it of God, day by day; let not them be of doubtful mind, μη μετεωρίζετε. Be not as meteors in the air, that are blown hither and thither with every wind; do not like them rise and fall, but maintain a consistency with yourselves; be even and steady, and have your hearts fixed; live not in careful suspense; let not your minds be continually perplexed between hope and fear, even upon the rack. Let not the children of God make themselves uneasy: For,

1. This is to make themselves like the children of this world; all these things do the nations of the world seek after, ver. 30. They that take care for the body only, and not for the soul, for this world only, and not for the other, look no further than what they shall eat and drink; and having no all-sufficient God to seek to and confide in, they burthen themselves with anxious cares about those things, but it ill becomes you to do so: You who are called out of the world, ought not to be thus conformed to the world, and to walk in the way of this people, Isa. viii. 11, 12. When inordinate cares prevail over us, we should think, what am I, a Christian or a heathen? Baptized or not baptized? If a Christian, if baptized, shall I rank myself with Gentiles, and join with them in their pursuits?

2. It is needless for them to disquiet themselves with care about the necessary supports of life, for they have a Father in heaven who doth and will take care for them. Your Father knows that you have need of these things, and considers it, and will supply your needs according to his riches in glory, for he is your Father, who made you subject to these necessities, and therefore will suit his compassions to them; your Father who maintains you, educates you, and designs an inheritance for you, and therefore will take care that you want no good thing.

3. They have better things to mind and pursue, ver. 31. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and mind that, you, my disciples, that are to preach the kingdom of God, let your hearts be upon your work, and your great care how to do that well, and that will effectually divert your thoughts from inordinate care about the things of the world. And let all that have souls to save, seek the kingdom of God, in which only they can be safe: Seek admission into it, seek advancement in it, seek the kingdom of grace, to be subjects in that; the kingdom of glory, to be princes in that, and then all these things shall be added to you; mind the affairs of your souls with diligence and care, and then trust God with all your other affairs.

4. They have better things to expect and hope for, ver. 32. Fear not, little flock: For the banishing of inordinate cares it is necessary that fears should be suppressed, when we frighten our-

selves with an apprehension of evil to come, we put ourselves upon the stretch of care how to avoid it, when after all perhaps it is but the creature of our own imagination; therefore fear not, little flock, but hope to the end, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. This comfortable word we had not in Matthew. Note, 1. Christ's flock in this world is a little flock, his sheep are but few and feeble: The church is a vineyard, a garden, a small spot, compared with the wilderness of this world, as Israel, 1 Kings xx. 27. who were like two little flocks of kids, when the Syrians filled the country. 2. Though it be a little flock, quite over numbered, and therefore in danger of being overpowered by its enemies, yet it is the will of Christ that they should not be afraid. Fear not, little flock, but see yourselves safe under the protection and conduct of the great and good Shepherd, and lie easy. 3. God has a kingdom in store for all that belong to Christ's little flock; a crown of glory, 1 Pet. v. 4. a throne of power, Rev. iii. 21. unfearchable riches, far exceeding the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces. The sheep on the right-hand are called to come and inherit the kingdom, it is theirs for ever; a kingdom for each. 4. The kingdom is given according to the good pleasure of the Father; it is your Father's good pleasure, it is given not of debt, but of grace, free grace, sovereign grace, even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee: The kingdom is his, and may he not do what he will with his own? 5. The believing hopes and prospects of the kingdom, should silence and suppress the fears of Christ's little flock in this world. Fear no trouble, for though it should come, it shall not come between you and the kingdom, that is sure, it is near; that is not an evil worth trembling at the thought of, which cannot separate us from the love of God. Fear not the want of any thing that is good for you, for if it be your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, you need not question but he will bear your charges thither.

Secondly, He chargeth them to make sure work for their souls, by laying up their treasure in heaven, ver. 33, 34. And those who have done this may be very easy, as to all the events of time.

1. Sit loose to this world, and to all your possessions in it. Sell that ye have, and give alms, i. e. rather than want wherewith to relieve those that are truly necessitous, sell that which you have superfluous, all that you can spare from the support of yourselves and families, and give it to the poor. Sell that ye have, if ye find it a hindrance from, or encumbrance in, the service of Christ. Do not think yourselves undone, if by being fined, imprisoned, or banished for the testimony of Jesus, you be forced to sell your estates, though they be the inheritance of your fathers. Do not sell to hoard up the money, or because you can make more of it by usury, but sell and give alms; and what is given in alms, in a right manner, is put out to the best interest, upon the best security.

2. Set your hearts upon the other world, and your expectations from that world. Provide yourselves bags that wax not old, that wax not empty, not of gold, but of grace in the heart, and good works in the life; these are bags that will last; grace will go with us into another world, for it is woven into the soul, and our good works will follow us, for God is not unrighteous to forget them. These will be treasures in heaven that will enrich us to eternity. (1.) It is treasure that will not be exhausted; we may spend upon it to eternity, and it will not be at all the less; there is no danger of seeing the bottom of it. (2.) It is treasure that we are in no danger of being robbed of, for no thief approacheth near it; what is laid up in heaven is out of the reach of enemies. (3.) It is treasure that will not spoil with keeping, no more than it will waste with spending, the moth doth not corrupt, as it doth our garments we now wear. Now by this it doth appear that we have laid up our treasure in heaven, if our hearts be there, while we are here, ver. 34. if we think much of heaven, and keep our eye upon it, if we quicken ourselves with the hopes of it, and keep ourselves in awe with the fear of falling short of it. But if your hearts be set upon the earth, and the things of it, it is to be feared you have your treasure and portion in it, and are undone when you leave it.

Thirdly, He chargeth them to get ready, and to keep in a readiness for Christ's coming; when all those who have laid up their treasure in heaven, shall enter upon the enjoyment of it, ver. 35, &c.

1. Christ is our Master, and we are his servants, not only working servants, but waiting servants, servants that are to do him honour, in waiting on him, and attending his motions; if any man serve me, let him follow me, follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes; but that is not all, they must do him honour in waiting for him, and expecting his return. We must be as men that wait for their Lord, that sit up late, while he stays out late, to be ready to receive him.

2. Christ, our Master, though now gone from us, will return again, return from the wedding; from solemnizing the nuptials abroad, to complete them at home. Christ's servants are now in a state of expectation, looking for their Master's glorious appearing, and doing every thing with an eye to that, and in order to that. He will come to take cognizance of his servants, and that being a critical day, they shall either stay with him or be turned out of doors, according as they are found in that day.

3. The



3. The time of our Master's return is uncertain; it will be *in the night*, it will be *far* in the night, when he has long *deferred* his coming, and when many have done looking for him; in the *second watch*, just before midnight, or in the *third watch* next after midnight, *ver.* 38. His coming to us at our death is uncertain, and to many it will be a great surprize; for, *ver.* 40. *The Son of man cometh at an hour that ye think not*, without giving notice beforehand. This speaks not only the uncertainty of the time of his coming, but the prevailing security of the greatest part of men, that are *unthinking*, and altogether regardless of the notices given them, so that whenever he comes, it is *an hour that they think not*.

4. That which he expects and requires from his servants, is, that they be *ready to open to him immediately*, whenever he comes, *ver.* 36. that is, that they be in a frame fit to receive him, or rather to be received by him; that they be found *as* his servants, in the posture that becomes them, with their *loins girded about*, alluding to servants that are ready to go where their master sends them, and do what their master bids them, having their long garments tucked up, which otherwise would hang about them and hinder them; and *their lights burning*, with which to light their master into the house, and up to his chamber.

5. Those servants will be happy who are found ready and in a good frame when their Lord comes, *ver.* 37. *Blessed are those servants* who after having waited long, continue in a waiting frame, until the hour that their Lord comes, and are then found awake, and aware of his first approach, of his first knock, and again, *ver.* 38. *blessed are those servants*, for then will be the time of their preferment. And here is such an instance of honour done them, as is scarce to be found among men, he *shall make them sit down to meat, and serve them*; for the bridegroom to wait upon his bride at table, is not uncommon, but to wait upon his servants is not *the manner of men*; yet Jesus Christ was among his disciples as *one that served*; and did once, to shew his condescension, *gird himself and serve them*, when he *washed their feet*, Joh. xiii. 4, 5. and it signified the joy with which they shall be received into the other world by the Lord Jesus, who is gone before to prepare for them, and has told them that his *Father will honour them*, Joh. xii. 26.

6. We are therefore kept at uncertainty concerning the precise time of his coming, that we may be always ready; for it is no thanks to a man to be ready for an attack, if he know before hand just the time when it will be made; the *good man of the house*, if he had known what hour the thief would have come, though he were never so careless a man, yet *would have watched*, and have frightened away the thieves, *ver.* 39. But we do not know at what hour the alarm will be given us, and therefore are concerned to watch at all times and never to be off our guard. Or this may intimate the miserable case of those who are careless and unbelieving in this great matter. If the *good man of the house* had notice of his danger of being robbed such a night, he would have sitten up and saved his house; but we have notice of the day of the Lord's coming, *as a thief in the night*, to the confusion and ruin of all secure sinners, and yet do not thus *watch*. If men will take such care of their houses, O let us be thus wise for our souls; *be ye therefore ready also*, as ready as the good man of the house would be, *if he knew what hour the thief would come*.

41. ¶ Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? 42. And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? 43. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh, shall find so doing. 44. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. 45. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants, and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken: 46. The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47. And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. 49. ¶ I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled? 50. But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! 51. Suppose ye that I am

come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division. 52. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. 53. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father: the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother: the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Here is, 1. Peter's question which he put to Christ, upon occasion of the foregoing parable, *ver.* 41. *Lord, speakest thou this parable to us*, that are thy constant followers, to us that are ministers, or also to all that come to be taught by thee, to all the hearers, and in them to all Christians. Peter was now, as often, spokesman for the disciples. We have reason to bless God that there are some such forward men, that have a gift of utterance, and let those that are such, take heed of being proud. Now Peter desires Christ to explain himself, and to direct the arrow of the foregoing parable to the mark he intended. He calls it a parable, because it was not only figurative, but weighty, solid and instructive. Lord, saith Peter, was it intended for us, or for all? To this Christ gives a direct answer, *Mark* xiii. 37. *What I say unto you, I say unto all*. Yet here he seems to shew that the apostles were primarily concerned in it. Note, We are all concerned to take to our selves what Christ in his word designs for us, and to enquire accordingly concerning it, *speakest thou this to us?* To me? Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears. Doth this word belong to me? speak it to my heart.

2. Christ's reply to this question, directed to Peter and the rest of the disciples. If what Christ had said before, did not so peculiarly concern them, but in common with other Christians, who must all watch and pray for Christ's coming, as his servants; yet this that follows is peculiarly adapted to ministers, who are the *stewards* in Christ's house: Now our Lord Jesus here tells them,

1. What was their duty as *stewards*, and what the trust committed to them. (1.) They are made *rulers of God's household*, under Christ, whose own the house is; ministers derive an authority from Christ to preach the gospel, and to administer the ordinances of Christ, and apply the seals of the covenant of grace. (2.) Their business is to give God's children and servants *their portion of meat*, that which was proper for them, and allotted to them; convictions and comfort to those to whom they respectively belong. *Suum cuique*. This is *rightly to divide the word of truth*, 2 Tim. ii. 15. (3.) To give it them *in due season*, at that time and in that way, as is most suitable to the temper and condition of those that are to be fed; a word *in season* to him *that is weary*. (4.) Herein they must approve themselves *faithful and wise*; *faithful* to their Master, by whom this great trust is reposed in them, and *faithful* to their fellow-servants, for whose benefit they are put in trust; and *wise* to improve an opportunity of doing honour to their Master, and service in the family. Ministers must be both *skilful* and *faithful*.

2. What would be their happiness if they approved themselves faithful and wise, *ver.* 43. *Blessed is that servant*, (1.) That is *doing*, and is not idle nor indulgent of his ease; even the rulers of the household must be *doing*, and make themselves *servants of all*. (2.) That is *so doing*, doing as he should be, giving them their *portion of meat*, by publick preaching, and personal application. (3.) That is *found so doing* when his Lord comes; that perseveres to the end, notwithstanding the difficulties he may meet with in the way. Now his happiness is illustrated by the performance of a steward, that has approved himself within a lower and narrower degree of service, he shall be preferred to a larger and higher, *ver.* 44. *he will make him ruler over all that he has*, which was Joseph's preferment in Pharaoh's court. Note, Ministers that obtain mercy of the Lord to be faithful, shall obtain further mercy, to be abundantly rewarded for their faithfulness in the day of the Lord.

3. What a dreadful reckoning there would be, if they were treacherous and unfaithful, *ver.* 45, 46. If that servant began to be quarrelsome and profane, he shall be called to an account, and severely punished. We had all this before in Matthew, and therefore shall here only observe, (1.) Our looking upon Christ's second coming as a thing at a distance, is the cause of all those irregularities which render the thought of it terrible to us: *He saith in his heart, my Lord delays his coming*. Christ's patience is very often misinterpreted his delay, to the discouragement of his people, and the encouragement of his enemies. (2.) The persecutors of God's people are commonly abandoned to security and sensuality; *they beat their fellow-servants*, and then *eat and drink with the drunken*, altogether unconcerned either at their own sin or their brethren's sufferings; as the king and Haman that *sat down to drink when the city Shushan was perplexed*: Thus they drank to drown the clamours of their own consciences, and baffle them, which otherwise would fly in their faces. (3.) Death and judgment will be very terrible to all wicked people, but especially to wicked ministers, it will be a surprize to them, *at an hour when they are*



not aware, it will be the determining of them to endless misery, they shall be cut in sunder, and have their portion assigned them with the unbelievers.

4. What an aggravation it would be of their sin and punishment, that they knew their duty and did not do it, *ver. 47, 48.* For that servant that knew his lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes, shall fall under a sorer punishment, and he that knew not, shall be beaten with few stripes; his punishment shall, in consideration of that, be mitigated. Here seems to be an allusion to the law, which made a distinction between sins committed through ignorance, and presumptuous sins, *Lev. v. 15. Numb. xv. 29, 30.* As also to another law concerning the number of stripes given to a malefactor, to be according to the nature of the crime, *Deut. xxv. 2.* Now, (1.) Ignorance of our duty is an extenuation of sin. He that knew not his lord's will, through carelessness and neglect, and his not having such opportunities as some others had of coming to the knowledge of it, and did things worthy of stripes, he shall be beaten, because he might have known his duty better, but with few stripes; his ignorance excuseth in part, but not in whole. Thus through ignorance the Jews put Christ to death, *Acts iii. 17. 1 Cor. ii. 8.* and Christ pleaded that ignorance in their excuse, they know not what they do. (2.) The knowledge of our duty is an aggravation of our sin. That servant that knew his lord's will, and yet did his own will, shall be beaten with many stripes: God will justly inflict more upon him, for abusing the means of knowledge he afforded him, which others would have made a better use of, and because it argues a great degree of wilfulness and contempt to sin against knowledge, of how much sorer punishment then shall they be thought worthy, besides the many stripes that their own consciences will give them? Son, remember. Here is a good reason for this added, *to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required,* especially when it is committed as a trust he is to account for. Those that have greater capacities of mind than others, more knowledge and learning, more acquaintance and converse with the scriptures, to them much is given, and their account will be accordingly.

3. A further discourse concerning his own sufferings which he expected, and concerning the sufferings of his followers which he would have them also to live in expectation of in general, *ver. 49. I am come to send fire on the earth.* By which some understand the preaching of the gospel, and the pouring out of the Spirit, holy fire, this Christ came to send with a commission to refine the world, to purge away its dross, to burn up its chaff, and it was already kindled; the gospel was begun to be preached, some prefaces there were to the pouring out of the Spirit: Christ baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, this Spirit descended in fiery tongues; but by what follows, it seems rather to be understood of the fire of persecution: Christ is not the author of it as it is the sin of the incendiaries, the persecutors; but he permits it, nay, he commissions it as a refining fire for the trial of the persecuted. This fire was already kindled in the enmity of the carnal Jews to Christ and his followers. What will I that it may presently be kindled; what thou dost, do quickly. If it be already kindled what will I! shall I wait the quenching of it? no, for it must fasten upon myself, and upon all, and glory will redound to God from it.

1. He must himself suffer many things; he must pass through this fire that was already kindled, *ver. 50. I have a baptism to be baptized with.* Afflictions are compared both to fire and water, *Psal. lxxvi. 12.—lxxix. 1, 2.* Christ's sufferings were both, he calls them a baptism, *Matt. xx. 22.* for he was watered or sprinkled with them, as Israel was baptized in the cloud, and dipped into them, as Israel was baptized in the sea, *1 Cor. x. 2.* He must be sprinkled with his own blood, and with the blood of his enemies, *Isa. lxxiii. 3.* See here, (1.) Christ's foresight of his sufferings; he knew what he was to undergo, and the necessity of undergoing it. *I am to be baptized with a baptism;* he calls his sufferings by a name that mitigates them, it is a baptism, not a deluge, I must be dipped in them, not drowned in them; and by a name that sanctifies them, for baptism is a sacred rite. Christ in his sufferings devoted himself to his Father's honour, and consecrated himself a priest for evermore, *Heb. vii. 27, 28.* (2.) Christ's forwardness to his sufferings. *How am I straitened till it be accomplished;* he doth long for the time when he should suffer and die, having an eye to the glorious issue of his sufferings; it is an allusion to a woman in travel, that is pained to be delivered, and welcomes her pains, because they hasten the birth of the child, and wishes them sharp and strong that the work may be cut short: Christ's sufferings were the travel of his soul, which he cheerfully underwent, in hope that he should by them see his seed, *Isa. liii. 10, 11.* So much was his heart upon the redemption and salvation of man.

2. He tells those about him, that they also must bear with hardships and difficulties, *ver. 51. Suppose ye that I came to give peace on earth,* i. e. to give you a peaceable possession of the earth, and outward prosperity on the earth: it is intimated that they were ready to entertain such a thought as this, nay, that they went upon this supposition, that the gospel would meet with an universal welcome, that people would unanimously embrace it, and would therefore study to make the preachers of it easy and

great, that Christ, if he did not give them pomp and power would at least give them peace; and herein they were encouraged by divers passages of the Old Testament, which speak of the peace of the Messiah's kingdom, which they were willing to understand of external peace. But, saith Christ, you will be mistaken, the event will declare the contrary, and therefore do not flatter yourselves into a fool's paradise: You will find,

1. That the effect of the preaching of the gospel will be division. Not but that the design of the gospel and its proper tendency is to unite the children of men to one another, to knit them together in holy love, and if all would receive it, this would be the effect of it; but there being multitudes that not only will not receive it, but oppose it, and have their corruptions exasperated by it, and are enraged at those that do receive it, it proves, though not the cause, yet the occasion of division. While the strong man armed kept his palace, in the Gentile world, his goods were at peace; all was quiet, for all went one way, the sects of philosophers agreed well enough, so did the worshippers of different deities; but when the gospel was preached, and many were enlightened by it, and turned from the power of Satan to God, then there was a disturbance, a noise and a shaking, *Ezek. xxxvii. 7.* Some distinguished themselves by their embracing the gospel, and others were angry that they did so. Yea, and among them that received the gospel, there would be different sentiments in lesser things, which would occasion division, and Christ permits it for holy ends, *1 Cor. xi. 19.* that Christians may learn and practise mutual forbearance, *Rom. xiv. 1, 2.*

2. That this division will reach into private families, and the preaching of the gospel will give occasion for discord among the nearest relations, *ver. 53. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father,* when the one turns Christian, and the other doth not; for that which doth turn Christian will be zealous by arguments and endearments to turn the other too, *1 Cor. vii. 16.* as soon as ever Paul was converted, he disputed, *Acts ix. 29.* And that which continues in unbelief, will be provoked, and will hate and persecute that which by his faith and obedience witnesseth against, and condemneth his unbelief and disobedience. A spirit of bigotry and persecution will break through the strongest bonds of relation and natural affection, see *Matt. x. 34.—xxiv. 7.* Even mothers and daughters fall out about religion; and those that believe not are so violent and outrageous, that they are ready to deliver up into the hands of the bloody persecutors those that believe, though otherwise very near and dear to them. We find in the *Acts*, that wherever the gospel came, persecution was stirred up; it was every where spoken against, and there was no small stir about that way: Therefore let not the disciples of Christ promise themselves peace upon earth, for they are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.

54. ¶ And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. 55. And when ye see the south-wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. 56. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth: but how is it, that ye do not discern this time? 57. Yea, and why even of your selves judge ye not what is right? 58. ¶ When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. 59. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

Having given his disciples their lesson in the foregoing verses, here Christ turns to the people, and gives them theirs, *ver. 54.* He said also to the people; he preached *ad populum*; as well as *ad clerum*; and, in general, he would have them be as wise in the affairs of their souls, as they are in their outward affairs. Two things he instanceth in:

First, Let them learn to discern the way of God towards them, that they may prepare accordingly. They were weather-wise, and by observing the winds and clouds, could foresee when there would be rain, and when there would be hot weather, (*ver. 54, 55.*) and they did accordingly, either house their hay and corn, or throw it abroad, and equipped themselves for a journey, according as they foresaw the weather would be. Even in the change of the weather God gives warning to us, what is coming, and art has improved those notices of nature in weather-glasses. These preparations here spoken of, were made by repeated observations upon the chain of causes; from what has been we conjecture what will be; see the benefit of experience, by taking notice we may come to give notice, who so is wise, will observe, and learn. See now,

1. The particulars of the presages: Ye see a cloud arising out of the west; the Hebrew would say, out of the sea; perhaps it is at first no bigger than a man's hand, *1 Kings xviii. 44.* but you say there is a shower in the womb of it, and it proves so. When



ye observe the south-wind blow, ye say there will be heat, for the hot countries of Africa lay not far south from Judea, and it comes to pass ordinarily; yet nature has not tied itself to such a track, but that sometimes we are out in our prognosticks.

2. The inferences from them, *ver. 56.* Ye hypocrites, who pretend to be wise, but really are not so, who pretend to expect the Messiah and his kingdom (for so the generality of the Jews did) and yet are no way disposed to receive and entertain it, *how is it that ye do not discern this time?* That ye do not discern that according to the indications given in the Old Testament prophecies, now is the time for the Messiah to appear, and that according to the marks given of him, I am he! Why are ye not aware that you have now an opportunity which you will not have long, and which you may never have again, of securing to yourselves an interest in the kingdom of God, and the privileges of that kingdom? *Now is the accepted time, now or never.* It is the folly and misery of man that he knows not his time, Eccl. ix. 12. This was the ruin of the men of that generation, that they knew not the day of their visitation, Luke xix. 44. But a wise man's heart discerns time and judgment; such was the wisdom of the men of Issachar, who had understanding of the times, 1 Chron. xii. 32. He adds, *ver. 57.* Yea, and why even of yourselves, though you had not these loud alarms given you, judge ye not what is right. You are not only stupid and regardless in matters that are purely of divine revelation, and take not the hints which that gives you, but you are so even in the dictates of the very light and law of nature. Christianity has reason and natural conscience on its side; and if men would allow themselves the liberty of judging what is right, they would soon find that all Christ's precepts concerning all things are right, and there is nothing more equitable in itself, nor better becoming us, than to submit to them, and be ruled by them.

Secondly, Let them hasten to make their peace with God in time, before it be too late, *ver. 55, 59.* This we had upon another occasion, Matt. v. 26.

1. We reckon it our wisdom in our temporal affairs to compound with those with whom we cannot contend, to agree with our adversary upon the best terms we can, before the equity be foreclosed, and we be left to the rigour of the law. When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, to whom the appeal is made, and knowest that he has an advantage against thee, and thou art in danger of being cast, you know it is the most prudent course to make the matter away between yourselves, *As thou art in the way, give diligence to be delivered from him,* to get a discharge, lest judgment be given, and execution awarded according to law. Wise men will not let their quarrels go to an extremity, but accommodate them in time.

2. Let us do thus in the affairs of our souls, we have by sin made God our adversary, have provoked his displeasure against us, and he has both right and might on his side; so that it is to no purpose to think of carrying on the controversy with him either at bar or in battle. Christ, to whom all judgment is committed, is the magistrate before whom we are hastening to appear: if we stand a trial before him, and insist upon our own justification, the cause will certainly go against us, the judge will deliver us to the officer, the ministers of his justice, and we shall be cast into the prison of hell, and the debt will be exacted to the utmost, though we cannot make a full satisfaction for it, it will be continually demanded, *till the last mite be paid,* which will not be to all eternity. Christ's sufferings were short, yet the value of them made them fully satisfactory. In the sufferings of damned sinners what is wanting in value, must be made up in an endless duration. Now in consideration of this, let us give diligence to be delivered out of the hands of God as an adversary, into his hands as a father, and this as we are in the way, which has the chief stress laid upon it here. While we are alive we are in the way; and now is our time, by repentance and faith through Christ (who is the Mediator as well as the magistrate) to get the quarrel taken up, while it may be done, before it be too late. Thus was God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, beseeching us to be reconciled. Let us take hold on the arm of the Lord stretched out in this gracious offer, that we may make peace, and we shall make peace, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. for we cannot walk together till we be agreed.

## C H A P. XIII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The good improvement Christ made of a piece of news that was brought him concerning some Galileans that were lately massacred by Pilate, as they were sacrificing in the temple at Jerusalem, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) The parable of the fruitless fig-tree, by which we are warned to bring forth fruits meet for that repentance which he had in the foregoing passage called us to, *ver. 6—9.* (3.) Christ's healing a poor infirm woman, on the sabbath-day, and justifying himself in it, *ver. 11—17.* (4.) A repetition of the parables of the grain of mustard-seed, and the leaven, *ver. 18—22.* (5.) His answer to the

question concerning the number of the saved, *ver. 23—30.* (6.) The slight he put upon Herod's malice and menaces, and the doom of Jerusalem read, *ver. 31—35.*

1. THERE were present at that season, some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2. And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3. I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. 4. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? 5. I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Here is, 1. Tidings brought to Christ of the death of some Galileans lately, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, *ver. 1.* Let us consider,

1. What this tragical story was: it is briefly related here, and is not met with in any of the historians of those times, Josephus indeed mentions Pilate's killing of some Samaritans, who under the conduct of a factious leader, were going in a tumultuous manner to mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans temple was; but we can by no means allow that story to be the same with this. Some think these Galileans were of the faction of Judas Gaulonita, who is called Judas of Galilee, Acts v. 37. who disowned Cæsar's authority, and refused to pay tribute to him: or, perhaps, these being Galileans, were only suspected by Pilate to be of that faction, and barbarously murdered, because those who were in with that pretender, were out of his reach. The Galileans being Herod's subjects, it is probable, this outrage, committed upon them by Pilate, occasioned the quarrel that was between Herod and Pilate, which we read of, Luke xxiii. 12. We are not told what number they were, perhaps but a few, whom Pilate had some particular pique against; (and therefore the story is overlooked by Josephus) but the circumstance remarked is, that he mingled their blood with their sacrifices, in the court of the temple. Though perhaps they had reason to fear Pilate's malice, yet they would not under pretence of that fear keep away from Jerusalem, whither the law obliged them to go up with their sacrifices. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it probable, that they were themselves killing their sacrifices, which was allowed; for the priest's work (they said) began with the sprinkling of the blood: and Pilate's officers came upon them by surprise, just at that time, when they were off their guard, (for otherwise the Galileans were mettled men, and generally went well armed) and mingled the blood of the sacrificers with the blood of the sacrifices, as if it had been equally acceptable to God. Neither the holiness of the place, nor of the work, would be a protection to them from the fury of an unjust judge, that neither feared God nor regarded man. The altar that used to be a sanctuary, and place of shelter, is now become a snare and a trap, a place of danger and slaughter.

2. Why it was related at this season to our Lord Jesus. (1.) Perhaps merely as a matter of news, which they supposed he had not heard before, and as a thing which they lamented, and believed he would do so too; for the Galileans were their countrymen. Note, Sad providences ought to be observed by us, and the knowledge of them communicated to others, that they and we may be suitably affected with them, and make a good use of them. (2.) Perhaps it was intended as a confirmation of what Christ had said in the close of the foregoing chapter, concerning the necessity of making our peace with God in time, before we be delivered to the officer, that is, to death, and so cast into prison, and then it will be too late to make agreements: now say they, Master, here is a fresh instance of some that were very suddenly delivered to the officer, that were taken away by death when they little expected it; and therefore we have all need to be ready. Note, It will be of good use to us, both to explain the word of God, and to enforce it upon ourselves by observing the providences of God. (3.) Perhaps they would stir him up being himself of Galilee, and a prophet, and one that had a great interest in that country, to find out a way to revenge the death of these Galileans upon Herod: If they had any thought of this kind they were quite out, for Christ was now going up to Jerusalem to be delivered into the hands of Pilate, and to have his blood, not mingled with his sacrifice, but itself made a sacrifice. (4.) Perhaps this was told Christ to deter him from going up to Jerusalem to worship, (*ver. 22.*) lest they should serve him as he had served these Galileans, and should suggest against him, as probably he had insinuated against those Galileans in vindication of his cruelty, that they came to sacrifice as Absalom did, with a seditious design, under colour of sacrificing to raise rebellion. Now lest Pilate, when his hand was in, should proceed further, they think it advisable that Christ should for the present keep out of the way. (5.) Christ's answer intimates that they told him this with a spiteful inuendo, that though Pilate was unjust in killing them, yet that without doubt they were secretly



men, else God would not have permitted Pilate thus barbarously to cut them off. It was very invidious, rather than they would allow them to be martyrs, though they died sacrificing, and perhaps suffered for their devotion, they will, without any colour of proof, suppose them to be malefactors; and it may be for no other reason, but because they were not of their party and denomination, differed from them, or had difference with them; this fate of theirs which was capable not only of a favourable but an honourable construction, shall be called a *just judgment* of God upon them, though they know not for what.

2. Christ's reply to this report: In which,

1. He seconded it with another story, which, like it, gave an instance of peoples being taken away by sudden death: It is not long since *the tower in Siloam fell*, and there were eighteen persons killed and buried in the ruins of it. Dr. Lightfoot's conjecture is, that this tower adjoined to *the pool of Siloam*, which was the same with the pool of Bethsaida, and that it belonged to those *porches* which were by the pool, in which the *impotent folk* lay that waited for the stirring of the water, John v. 3. and they who were killed were some of them, or some of those who in this pool used to purify themselves for the temple-service, for it was near the temple. Whoever they were, it was a sad story, yet such melancholy accidents we often hear of: For *as the birds are caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them*, Eccl. ix. 12. Towers that were built for safety, oft prove mens destruction.

2. He cautioned his hearers not to make an ill use of these and such like events, nor from thence to censure *great sufferers*, as if they were therefore to be accounted *great sinners*: Suppose ye that these Galileans, who were slain as they were sacrificing, were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things, I tell you nay, ver. 2, 3. Perhaps they that told him the story of the Galileans were Jews, and were glad of any thing that furnished them with matter of reflexion upon the Galileans, and therefore Christ retorted upon them, the story of the men of Jerusalem, that came to an untimely end, for *with what measure* of that kind we mete, it shall be measured to us again. Now suppose ye that those eighteen who met with their death from the tower of Siloam, while perhaps they were expecting their cure from the pool of Siloam, that they were debtors to divine justice above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem, I tell you nay: Whether it make for us or against us, we must abide by this rule, that we cannot judge of mens sins by their sufferings in this world; for many are thrown into the furnace as gold, to be purified, not as dross and chaff to be consumed. We must therefore not be harsh in our censures of those that are afflicted more than their neighbours, as Job's friends were in their censures of him, lest we add sorrow to the sorrowful; nay, *lest we condemn the generation of the righteous*, Psal. lxxiii. 14. If we will be judging, we have enough to do to judge ourselves; nor indeed can we know love or hatred by all that is before us, because *all things came alike to all*, Eccl. ix. 1, 2. And we might as justly conclude that the oppressors, and Pilate among the rest, on whose side there is power and success, are the greatest saints, as that the oppressed, and those Galileans among the rest that are all in tears, and they have no comforter, no, not the priests and Levites that attended the altar, are the greatest sinners. Let us in our censures of others, do as we would be done by, for as we do we shall be done by; *judge not, that ye be not judged*, Mat. vii. 1.

3. On these stories he founded a call to repentance, adding to each of them this awakening word, *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, ver. 3, 4. (1.) This intimates that we all deserve to perish as much as they did, and had we been dealt with according to our sins, according to the iniquity of our holy things, our blood had been long ere this mingled with our sacrifices, by the justice of God. It must moderate our censures not only that we are sinners, but that we are as great sinners as they, have as much sin to repent of, as they had to suffer for. (2.) That therefore we are all concerned to repent, to be sorry for what we have done amiss, and to do so no more. The judgments of God upon others, are loud calls to us to repent. See how Christ improved every thing for the pressing of that great duty, which he came not only to gain room for, and give hopes to, but to enjoin upon us, and that is to repent. (3.) That repentance is the way to escape perishing, and it is a sure way; *so iniquity shall not be your ruin*, but upon no other terms. (4.) That if we repent not, we shall certainly perish, as others have done before us. Some lay an emphasis upon the word *likewise*, and apply it to the destruction that was coming upon the people of the Jews, and particularly upon Jerusalem, who were destroyed by the Romans at the time of their passover, and so, like the Galileans, they had their blood mingled with their sacrifices, and many of them, both in Jerusalem and in other places, were destroyed by the fall of walls and buildings which were battered down about their ears, as those that died by the fall of the tower of Siloam: But certainly it looks further, except we repent, we shall perish eternally, as they perished out of this world. The same Jesus that bid us repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, bid us repent, for otherwise we shall perish; so that he hath set before us life and death, good and evil, and put us to our choice. (5.) The perishing of those in their impenitency, will be in a particular manner

aggravated, who have been most harsh and severe in judging others.

6. ¶ He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. 7. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? 8. And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9. And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that, thou shalt cut it down.

This parable is intended to enforce that word of warning immediately going before, *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*; except you be reformed, you will be ruined, as the barren tree, except it bring forth fruit, it will be cut down.

1. This parable primarily refers to the nation and people of the Jews: God chose them for his own, made them a people near to him, gave them advantages for knowing and serving him above any other people, and expected answerable returns of duty and obedience from them, which turning to his praise and honour he would have accounted fruit; but they disappointed his expectations, they did not do their duty, they were a reproach instead of being a credit to their profession; upon this he justly determined to abandon them, and cut them off, to deprive them of their privileges, to unchurch and unpeople them; but upon Christ's, as of old upon Moses's, intercession, he graciously gave them further time, and further mercy; tried them as it were another year, by sending his apostles among them to call them to repentance, and in Christ's name to offer them pardon upon repentance; and some of them were wrought upon to repent; and bring forth fruit, and with them all was well; but the body of the nation continued impenitent, and unfruitful, and ruin without remedy came upon them, about 40 years after they were cut down and cast into the fire, as John Baptist had told them, Matt. iii. 10. which saying of his this parable enlargeth upon.

2. Yet it has, without doubt, a further reference, and is designed for the awakening of all that enjoy the means of grace, and the privileges of the visible church, to see to it, that the temper of their minds, and the tenor of their lives be answerable to their professions and opportunities, for that is the fruit required. Now observe here,

1. The advantages which this fig-tree had, it was planted in a vineyard, in better soil, and where it had more care taken of it; and more pains taken with it, than other fig-trees had, that commonly grew not in vineyards (those are for vines) but by the way-side, Matt. xxi. 19. This fig-tree belonged to a certain man that owned it, and was at expence upon it. Note, The church of God is his vineyard, distinguished from the common, and fenced about, Isa. v. 1, 2. We are fig-trees planted in this vineyard by our baptism; we have a place and a name in the visible church, and it is our privilege and happiness that we have so, it is a distinguishing favour: He has not dealt so with other nations.

2. The owner's expectation from it: He came and sought fruit thereon, and he had reason to expect it. He did not send, but came himself, noting his desire to find fruit. Christ came into this world, came to his own, to the Jews, seeking fruit. Note, The God of heaven requires and expects fruit from those that have a place in his vineyard. He has his eye upon those that enjoy the gospel, to see whether they live up to it; he seeks evidences of their getting good by the means of grace they enjoy. Leaves will not serve, crying Lord, Lord; blossoms will not serve, beginning well, and promising fair, there must be fruit: Our thoughts, words, and actions, must be according to the gospel light and love.

3. The disappointment of his expectation: He found none, none at all, not one fig. Note, It is sad to think how many enjoy the privileges of the gospel, and yet do nothing at all to the honour of God, nor to answer the end of his entrusting them with those privileges; and it is a disappointment to him, and a grief to the Spirit of his grace. (1.) He here complains of it to the dresser of the vineyard; I come seeking fruit, but am disappointed; I find none, looking for grapes, but behold, wild grapes; he is grieved with such a generation. (2.) He aggravates it, with two considerations: 1. That he had waited long, and yet was disappointed; as he was not high in his expectations, he only expected fruit, not much fruit, so he was not hasty, he came three years, year after year: applying it to the Jews, he came one space of time before the captivity, another after that, and another in the preaching of John Baptist, and of Christ himself; or it may allude to the three years of Christ's publick ministry which were now expiring. In general, it teacheth us, that the patience of God is stretched out to long-suffering, with many that enjoy the gospel, and do not bring forth the fruits of it; and this patience



is wretchedly abused, which provokes God to so much the greater severity. How many times three years has God come to many of us, *seeking fruit*, but has *found none*, or next none, or worse than none. 2. That this fig-tree did not only not bring forth fruit, but it did hurt, it *cumbered the ground*, it took up the room of a fruitful tree, and was injurious to all about it. Note, Those who do not *do good*, commonly *do hurt*, by the influence of their bad example; they grieve and discourage those that are good, they harden and encourage those that are bad. And the mischief is the greater, and the ground the more cumbered, if it be a high large spreading tree, and if it be an old tree of long standing.

4. The doom passed upon it; *cut it down*. He saith this to the *dresser of the vineyard*, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed, to the ministers who are in his name to declare this doom. Note, No other can be expected concerning barren trees, but that they should be *cut down*. As the unfruitful vineyard is dismantled, and thrown open to the common, *Isa. v. 5, 6*. so the unfruitful trees in the vineyard are cast out of it, and whither, *John xv. 6*. It is cut down by the judgments of God, especially spiritual judgments, such as those on the Jews that believed not, *Isa. vi. 9, 10*. It is cut down by death, and cast into the fire of hell, and good reason, for *why cumbereth it the ground?* What reason is there why it should have a place in the vineyard to no purpose?

5. The dresser's intercession for it. Christ is the great intercessor, he ever lives interceding: ministers are intercessors; they that *dress* the vineyard should *intercede* for it: those we *preach to*, we should *pray for*, for we must give ourselves to the *word of God*, and to *prayer*. Now observe,

1. What it is he prays for, and that is a reprieve, *Lord, let it alone this year also*. He doth not pray, Lord, let it never be cut down, but, Lord, not now: Lord, do not remove the dresser, do not withhold the dews, do not pluck up the tree. Note, 1. It is desirable to have a barren tree reprieved: Those that have not yet grace to repent, yet it is a mercy to them to have *space to repent*, as it was to the old world to have 120 years allowed them to make their peace with God. 2. We owe it to Christ, the great intercessor, that *barren trees* are not cut down presently: had it not been for his interposul, the whole world had been cut down upon the sin of Adam; but he said, *Lord, let it alone*; and it is he that upholds all things. 3. We are encouraged to pray to God, for the merciful reprieve of barren fig-trees: Lord, *let them alone*, continue them yet a while in their probation; bear with them a little longer, and wait to be gracious. Thus must we stand in the gap to turn away wrath. 4. Reprieves of mercy are but for a time: *Let it alone this year also*, a short time, but a sufficient time to make trial. When God has born long, we may hope he will bear yet a little longer, but we cannot expect he should bear always. 5. Reprieves may be obtained by the prayers of others for us, but not pardons; there must be our own faith and repentance and prayers, else no pardon.

2. How he promiseth to improve this reprieve if it be obtained: *Till I shall dig about it and dung it*. Note, 1. In general, our prayers must always be seconded with our endeavours. The dresser seems to say, Lord, it may be I have been wanting in that which is my part, but let it alone this year, and I will do more than I have done towards its fruitfulness. Thus in all our prayers we must request God's grace with a humble resolution to do our duty, else we mock God, and show that we do not rightly value the mercies we pray for. 2. In particular, when we pray to God for grace for ourselves or others, we must follow our prayers with diligence in the use of the means of grace. The dresser of the vineyard engageth to do *his* part, and therein teacheth ministers to do *theirs*. He will *dig about* the tree, and will *dung* it; unfruitful Christians must be *awakened* by the terrors of the law, which *break up the fallow ground*, and then encouraged by the promises of the gospel, which are warming and fattening, as manure to the tree; both methods must be tried, the one prepares for the other, and all little enough.

3. Upon what foot he leaves the matter: Let us try it, and try what we can do with it one year more, *and if it bear fruit well*, ver. 19. it is possible, nay, there is hope, that yet it may be fruitful, and in that hope the owner will have patience with it, and the dresser will take pains with it, and if it should have the desired success, both will be pleased that it was not cut down. The word *well* is not in the original, but the expression is abrupt, *If it bear fruit*, supply it how you please, so as to express how wonderfully well-pleased both the owner and dresser will be, if it bear fruit, there will be cause of rejoicing, we have what we would have; but it cannot be better expressed than as we do, *well*. Note, Unfruitful professors of religion, if after long unfruitfulness they will repent and amend, and bring forth fruit, *all shall be well*; God will be *pleased*, for he will be *praised*: Ministers hands will be strengthened, and such penitents will be their joy now, and their crown shortly: Nay, there will be joy in heaven for it; the ground will be no longer cumbered but bettered, the vineyard beautified, and the good trees in it made better. And as for the tree itself, it is *well* for it; it shall not only not be cut down, but it shall *receive blessing from God*, *Heb. vi. 7*. it shall be *purged*, and *shall bring forth more fruit*, for the Father is its

husbandman, *John xv. 2*. And it shall at last be transplanted from the vineyard on earth, to the paradise above.

But he adds, *If not then, after that thou shalt cut it down*: observe here, 1. That though God bear long, he will not bear always with unfruitful professors; his patience will have an end, and if it be abused will give way to that wrath which will have no end. Barren trees will certainly be *cut down* at last, and *cast into the fire*. 2. The longer God hath waited, and the more cost he has been at upon them, the greater will their destruction be: To be cut down *after that*, after all these expectations from it, these debates concerning it, this concern for it, will be sad indeed, and will aggravate the condemnation. 3. Cutting down, though it is work that shall be done, yet it is work that God doth not take pleasure in: For, observe here, the owner said to the dresser, *do thou cut it down*, for it cumbered the ground: Nay, said the dresser, if it must be done at last, *thou shalt cut it down*, let not my hand be upon it. 4. Those that now intercede for barren trees, and take pains with them, if they persist in their unfruitfulness, will be even content to see them cut down, and will not have one more word to say for them. Their best friends will acquiesce in, nay, they will approve and applaud the righteous judgment of God, in the day of the manifestation of it, *Rev. xv. 3, 4*.

10. And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. 11. ¶ And behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up *her self*. 12. And when Jesus saw her, he called *her* to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. 13. And he laid *his* hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. 14. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. 15. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead *him* away to watering: 16. And ought not this woman being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day? 17. And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Here is, 1. The miraculous cure of a woman that had been long under a spirit of infirmity. Our Lord Jesus spent his *sabbaths* in the *synagogues*, ver. 10. We should make conscience of doing so, as we have opportunity; and not think we can spend the sabbath as well at home in reading a good book, for religious assemblies are a divine institution, which we must bear our testimony to, though but of two or three. And when he was in the synagogues on the *sabbath-day*, he was teaching there, *ἐν δίδασκων*; it notes a continued act; he *still taught the people knowledge*. He was in his element when he was teaching. Now to confirm the doctrine he preached, and recommend it as faithful and well worthy of all acceptance, he wrought a miracle, a miracle of mercy.

(1.) The object of charity that presented itself was a woman in the synagogue, that had a *spirit of infirmity eighteen years*, ver. 11. *i. e.* She had an infirmity, which an evil spirit, by divine permission, had brought upon her, which was such as that she was *bowed together* by strong convulsions, and could *in no wise lift up herself*; and having been so long thus, the disease was incurable, she could not stand erect, which is reckoned man's honour above the beasts. Observe, Though she was under this infirmity, by which she was much *deformed* and made to look mean, and not only so, but, as is supposed, motion was very painful to her, yet she went to the *synagogue on the sabbath-day*. Note, Even bodily infirmities, unless they be very grievous indeed, should not keep us from publick worship on sabbath-days; for God can help us beyond our expectation.

(2.) The offer of this cure to one that sought it not, speaks the preventing mercy and grace of Christ, ver. 11. *When Jesus saw her he called her to him*. It doth not appear that she made any application to him, or had any expectation from him, but *before she called he answered*. She came to him to be *taught*, and to get good to her soul, and then Christ gave this relief to her bodily infirmity. Note, Those whose first and chief care is for their souls, do best befriend the true interests of their bodies likewise, for *other things shall be added to them*. Christ in his gospel calls and invites those to come to him for healing, that labour under



under *spiritual infirmities*, and if he *calls us*, he will undoubtedly help us when we come to him.

(3.) The cure effectually and immediately wrought, speaks his almighty power. He *laid his hands on her*, and said, *Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity*. Though thou hast been long labouring under it, thou art at length released from it. Let not those despair whose disease is *inveterate*, who have been long in affliction, God can at length relieve them, therefore though he tarry, wait for him. Though it was a *spirit of infirmity*, an evil spirit that she was under the power of, Christ has a power superior to that of Satan, is *stronger than he*. Though *she could in no wise lift up herself*, Christ could lift her up, and enable her to lift up herself: She that had been *crooked*, was *immediately made straight*, and the scripture was fulfilled, *Psal. cxlvi. 8. The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down*.

And this cure represents the work of Christ's grace upon the souls of people. (1.) In the *conversion* of sinners, unsanctified hearts are under this *spirit of infirmity*, they are distorted, the faculties of the soul are quite out of place, and order; they are *bowed down* towards things below, *O curvæ in terram animæ!* they can in no wise *lift up themselves* to God and heaven; the bent of the soul, in its natural state, is the quite contrary way. Such crooked souls seek not to Christ, but he calls them to him, lays the hand of his power and grace upon them, speaks a healing word to them, by which he *looseth them from their infirmity*; makes the soul *straight*, reduceth it to order, raiseth it above worldly regards, and directs its affections, and aims heavenwards. Though *man cannot make that straight which God has made crooked*, Eccl. vii. 13. yet the grace of God can make that straight which the sin of man has made crooked. (2.) In the *consolation* of good people. Many of the children of God are long under a *spirit of infirmity*, a spirit of bondage, through prevailing grief and fear, their *souls are cast down and disquieted* within them, *they are troubled, they are bowed down greatly, they go mourning all the day long*, Psal. xxxviii. 6. But Christ, by his Spirit of adoption, looseth them from this infirmity in due time, and raiseth them up.

(4.) The present effect of this cure upon the soul of the patient, as well as upon her body; she *glorified God*, gave him the praise of her cure, to whom all praise is due. When crooked souls are made straight, they will shew it by their glorifying God.

2. The offence that was taken at this, by the ruler of the synagogue, as if our Lord Jesus had committed some heinous crime in healing this poor woman. He *had indignation* at it, because it was *on the sabbath-day*, ver. 14. One would think the miracle should have convinced him, and that the circumstance of its being done on the sabbath-day could not have served to evade the conviction; but what light can shine so clear, so strong, which a spirit of bigotry and enmity to Christ and his gospel will not serve to shut men's eyes against? Never was such honour done to the synagogue he was ruler of, as Christ had now done it, and yet he had indignation at it. He had not indeed the impudence to quarrel with Christ, but he said *to the people*, reflecting upon Christ in what he said, *There are six days in which men ought to work, in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day*. See here how light he made of the miracles Christ wrought, as if they were *things of course*, and no more but what quacks and mountebanks did every day; you may come and be healed any day of the week. Christ's cures were become in his eyes cheap and common things. See also how he stretcheth the law beyond its intention, or any just construction that could be put upon it, in making either healing, or being healed with a touch of the hand, or a word's speaking, to be that *work* which is *forbidden* on the sabbath-day. This was evidently *the work of God*; and when God tied us out from working that day, did he tie himself out? The same word in Hebrew signifies both godly and merciful, (*chesed*) to intimate that works of *mercy* and *charity* are in a manner works of *piety*, 1 Tim. v. 4. and are therefore very proper on sabbath-days.

3. Christ's justification of himself in what he had done, ver. 15. *The Lord then answered him*, as he had answered others, who in like manner cavilled at him, *Thou hypocrite*. Christ, who knows men's hearts, may call those hypocrites whom it would be presumption for us to call so, who *must* judge charitably, and can judge but according to the outward appearance. Christ knew he had a real enmity to him, and to his gospel, and he did but cloke that with a pretended zeal for the sabbath-day; and that when he bid the people come on the *six days* and be healed, he really would not have them be healed any day. Christ could have told him this, but he vouchsafes to reason the case with him: And,

(1.) He *appeals* to the common practice among the Jews, which was never disallowed, that of *watering* their cattle on the sabbath-day; those cattle that are kept up in the stable, are constantly *loosed from the stall on the sabbath-day, and led away to watering*: It would be a barbarous thing not to do it; for *a merciful man regardeth the life of his beast*, his own beast that serves him. Letting the cattle *rest* on the sabbath-day, as the law directed, would be worse than working them, if they must be made to fast

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on that day, as the Ninevites cattle on their fast-day, that were not permitted to *feed or drink water*, Jon. iii. 7.

(2.) He applies this to the present case, ver. 16. Must an *ox* or an *ass* have compassion shewed them on the sabbath-day, and have so much time and pains bestowed upon them *every* sabbath, to be loosed from the stall, led away, perhaps a great way to the water, and then back again; and shall not this woman, only with a touch of the hand, and a word's speaking, be *loose*, from a much *greater* grievance than that which the cattle undergo, when they are kept a day without water. For, consider, (1.) She is *a daughter of Abraham*, whom you all pride yourselves in a relation to; she is *your sister*, and shall she be denied a favour that you grant to an ox or an ass, dispensing a little with the supposed strictness of the sabbath-day? She is *a daughter of Abraham*, and therefore is entitled to the Messiah's blessings, to the *bread* which belongs to the *children*. (2.) She is one whom Satan *has bound*, he had a hand in the affliction, and therefore it was not only an act of charity to the poor woman, but of piety to God, to break the power of the devil, and baffle him. (3.) She has been in this deplorable condition *to these eighteen years*, and therefore now there is an opportunity of delivering her, it ought not to be deferred *a day* longer, as you would have it, for any of you would have thought eighteen years affliction full long enough.

4. The different effect that this had upon those that heard him. He had sufficiently made it out, not only that it was lawful, but that it was highly fit and proper to heal this poor woman *on the sabbath-day*, and thus publicly in the synagogue, that they might all be witnesses of the miracle: And now observe,

1. What a confusion this was to the malice of his persecutors, *When he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed*, ver. 17. they were put to silence, and were vexed that they were so, that they had not a word to say for themselves; it was not a shame that worked repentance, but indignation rather. Note, Sooner or later all the adversaries of Christ, and his doctrine and miracles, will be made *ashamed*.

2. What a confirmation this was to the faith of his friends: *All the people* who had a better sense of things, and judged more impartially than their rulers, rejoiced *for all the glorious things that were done by him*. The shame of his foes, was the joy of his followers; the increase of his interest was what the one fretted at, and the other triumphed in. The things Christ did, were *glorious things*, they were all so, and though now clouded, perhaps will appear so, and we ought to rejoice in them. Every thing that is the honour of Christ, is the comfort of Christians.

18. ¶ Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? 19. It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and cast into his garden, and it grew, and waxed a great tree: and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. 20. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? 21. It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. 22. And he went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying towards Jerusalem.

Here is, 1. The gospel's progress foretold, in two parables, which we had before, *Matt. xiii. 31, 33*. The *kingdom of the Messiah* is the *kingdom of God*, for it advanceth his glory; this kingdom was yet a mystery, and people were generally in the dark, and under mistakes about it: Now when we would describe a thing to those that are strangers to it, we chuse to do it by similitudes, such a person you know not, but I will tell you who he is like; so Christ undertakes here to shew *what the kingdom of God is like*, ver. 18. and *whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God*, ver. 20. it will be quite another thing from what you expect, and will operate and gain its point in quite another manner.

1. You expect it will appear *great*, and will arrive at its perfection all of a sudden; but you are mistaken, *it is like a grain of mustard-seed*, a little thing, takes up but little room, makes but a little figure, and promiseth but little, and yet when sown in soil proper to receive it, it *waxes a great tree*, ver. 19. Many, perhaps, were prejudiced against the gospel, and loth to come in to the obedience of it, because its beginning was so small; they were ready to say of Christ, *Can this man save us?* And of his gospel, *Is this likely ever to come to any thing?* Now Christ would remove this prejudice by assuring them, that though *its beginning was small*, its *latter end should greatly increase*; so that many should come, should come upon the wing, should *fly like a cloud*, to lodge in the branches of it with more safety and satisfaction, than in the branches of Nebuchadnezzar's tree, *Dan. ix. 21*.

2. You expect it will make its way by *external* means, by subduing nations, and vanquishing armies, though it shall work *like leaven*, silently, and insensibly, and without any force or violence, ver. 21. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, so



the doctrine of Christ will strangely *diffuse* its relish into the world of mankind; in this it triumphs that *the savour of the knowledge of it* is unaccountably made manifest in every place, beyond what one could have expected, 2 Cor. ii. 14. But you must *give it time*, wait what will be the issue of the preaching of the gospel to the world, and you will find it doth wonders, and alters the property of the souls of men. By degrees *the whole will be leavened*, even as many as are like *the meal to the leaven*, prepared to receive the savour of it.

2. Christ's progress towards Jerusalem recorded, *ver. 22. He went through the cities and villages teaching and journeying.* Here we find Christ an itinerant, but an itinerant preacher, journeying towards Jerusalem, to the feast of dedication, which was *in the winter*, when travelling was uncomfortable, yet he would be about his Father's business; and therefore whatever cities or villages he could make in his way, he gave them a sermon or two, not only in the cities, but in the country villages. Wherever providence brings us, we should endeavour to be doing all the good we can.

23. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, 24. ¶ Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. 25. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer, and say unto you, I know you not whence you are: 26. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. 27. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. 28. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. 29. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. 30. And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

We have here,

1. A question put to our Lord Jesus; who it was that put it, we are not told, whether a friend or a foe; for he gave both a great liberty of questioning with him, and returned answers to the thoughts and intents of the heart. The question was, 1. *Are there few that be saved?* *ver. 23. εἰ ὀλίγοι οἱ σωζόμενοι, If the saved be few, Master, I have heard thou shouldest say so; Is it true?*

(1.) Perhaps it was a *captious* question; that he put it to him tempting him, with design to ensnare him, and lessen his reputation. If he should say, many would be saved, they would reproach him as too loose, and making salvation cheap; if few, they would reproach him as precise and strait-laced. The Jewish doctors said, That *all Israel should have a place in the world to come*, and would he dare to contradict that! Those that have sucked in a corrupt notion, are ready to make it the standard by which to measure all mens judgments; and in nothing do men more betray their ignorance, presumption, and partiality, than in judging of the salvation of others.

(2.) Perhaps it was a *curious* question, a nice speculation, which he had lately been disputing upon with his companions, and they all agreed to refer it to Christ. Note, Many are more inquisitive who shall be saved, and who not, than what they shall do to be saved. It is commonly asked, may such and such be saved? but it is well we may be saved without knowing that.

(3.) Perhaps it was an *admiring* question: He had taken notice how strict the law of Christ was, and how bad the world was, and comparing these together, cries out, How few are there that will be saved? Note, We have reason to wonder, that of the many to whom the word of salvation is sent, there are so few to whom it is indeed a saving word.

(4.) Perhaps it was an *enquiring* question; *If there be few that be saved*, what then? what influence should this have upon me? Note, It concerns us all, seriously to improve the great truth of the fewness of those that are saved.

2. Christ's answer to this question, which directs us what use to make of this truth. Our Saviour did not give a direct answer to his enquiry, for he came to *guide mens consciences*, not to *gratify their curiosity*. Ask not how many shall be saved, but be they more or fewer, shall I be one of them? Not what shall become of such and such, and *what shall this man do?* but what shall I do? and what will become of me? Now in Christ's answer observe,

1. A quickening exhortation and direction. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate:* This is directed not to him only that asked the question, but to all, to us, it is in the plural number, *strive ye*. Note, (1.) All that will be saved, must *enter in at the strait gate*, must undergo a change of the whole man, such as amounts to no less than being born again, and must submit to a strict discipline. (2.) Those that would enter in at the strait gate, must *strive to enter*. It is a hard matter to get to heaven, and a point that will not be gained without a great deal of care and pains, of difficulty and diligence. We must strive with God in prayer, wrestle as Jacob, strive against sin and Satan; we must strive in every duty of religion, strive with our own hearts, *ἀγωνίζεσθε*, be in an agony, strive as those that run for a prize, excite and exert yourselves to the utmost.

2. Divers awakening considerations to enforce this exhortation: O that we may be all awakened and quickened by them! They are such considerations as will serve to answer the question, *Are there few that shall be saved?*

1. Think how many take *some pains* for salvation, and yet perish because they do not take *enough*; and you will say, that there are *few that will be saved*, and that it highly concerns us to *strive*; *Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able*; they *seek*, but they do not *strive*. Note, The reason why many come short of grace and glory is, because they rest in a *lazy seeking* of that which will not be attained without a *laborious striving*. They have a *good mind of happiness*, and a *good opinion of holiness*, and take *some good steps* towards both, but their convictions are weak, they do not consider what they know and believe, and consequently their desires are cold, and their endeavours feeble, and there is no strength or steadiness in their resolutions; and thus they *come short*, and lose the prize, because they do not press forward. Christ avers this upon his own word, *I say unto you*, and we may take it upon his word, for he knows both the counsels of God, and the hearts of the children of men.

2. Think of the *distinguishing* day that is coming, and the *decisions* of that day, and you will say there are *few that shall be saved*, and that we are concerned to strive. The *master of the house* will rise up, and shut to the door, *ver. 25.* Christ is the *master of the house*, that will take cognizance of all that frequent his house, and are retainers to it, will examine comers and goers, and those that pass and repass. Now he seems as if he left things at large, but the day is coming when he will *rise up and shut to the door*. What door? (1.) A door of *distinction*: Now within the temple of the church there are *carnal professors*, who worship in the *outer-court*, and *spiritual professors*, who worship *within the veil*; between these the door is now open, and they meet *promiscuously* in the same external performances: But when the *Master of the house is risen up*, the door will be shut between them, that those who are in the *outer-court* may be kept out, and left to be *trodden under foot by the Gentiles*, Rev. xi. 2. They that are *filthy*, shut the door upon them, and let them be *filthy still*; and that those who are within may be kept within, that are *holy*, may be *holy still*. The door is shut, to *separate* between the *precious* and the *vile*, that *sinners* may no longer *stand in the congregation of the righteous*. Then you shall return and discern betwixt them. (2.) A door of *denial* and exclusion. The door of *mercy* and *grace* hath long *stood open* to them, but they would *not come in by it*, would not be beholden to the *favour* of that door, they hoped to *climb up some other way*, and to get to heaven by their own merits: And therefore when the Master of the house is risen up, he will *justly shut that door*; let them not expect to enter by it, but let them take their own measures. Thus, When Noah was safe in the ark, God *shut the door*, to *exclude* all those that depended upon shelters of their own, in the approaching flood.

3. Think how many that were very *confident* they should be *saved*, will be rejected in the day of trial, and their confidences will deceive them; and you will say, there are *few that shall be saved*, and we are all concerned to *strive*: Considering,

(1.) What an *assurance* they had of *admission*, and how far their hope carried them, even to *heaven's gate*, there they *stand and knock*, knock as if they had authority, knock as those that belong to the house, saying, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, for we think we have a right to enter: Take us in among the *saved ones*, for we joined ourselves to them. Note, Many are ruined by an ill-grounded hope of heaven, which they never distrusted or called in question, and therefore conclude their state is good, because they never doubted it. They call Christ *Lord*, as if they were his servants; nay, in token of their importunity they double it, *Lord, Lord*, they are desirous now to enter in by that door which they had formerly made light of, would now gladly come in among those serious Christians, whom they had secretly despised.

(2.) What *grounds* they had for this confidence. Let us see what their plea is, *ver. 26.* (1.) They had been *Christ's guests*, had had an intimate converse with him, and had shared in his favours. *We have eaten and drunk in thy presence*, at thy table; Judas eat bread with Christ, dipped with him in the dish. Hypocrites, under the disguise of their external profession, receive the Lord's



Lord's supper, and in it partake of the children's bread, as if they were children. (2.) They had been *Christ's hearers*; had received instruction from him, and were well acquainted with his doctrine and law: *Thou hast taught in our streets*, a distinguishing favour which few had, and sure it might be taken as a pledge of distinguishing favour now: For wouldest thou teach us, and not save us?

(3.) How their confidence will fail them, and all their pleas be rejected as frivolous. Christ will say to them, *I know you not whence you are*, ver. 25. And again, ver. 26. *I tell you, I know you not, depart from me*. He doth not deny but that which they pleaded was true, they had *eaten and drunk in his presence*, by the same token, that they had no sooner eaten of his bread, but they lift up the heel against him: He had taught in their streets, by the same token, that they had despised his instruction, and would not submit to it. And therefore, (1.) He *disowns* them, *I know you not*; you do not belong to my family. *The Lord knows them that are his*, but them that are not, he doth not know, he has nothing to do with them. *I know you not whence you are*. You are not of me, you are not from above, you are not branches of my house, of my vine. (2.) He *discards* them; *Depart from me*. It is the hell of hell to depart from Christ! The principal part of the misery of the damned: Depart from my door, here is nothing for you, no, not a drop of water. (3.) He gives them such a character, as is the reason of this doom. *Ye are workers of iniquity*; this is their ruin, that, under a pretence of piety, they kept up secret haunts of sin, and did the devil's drudgery in Christ's livery.

(4.) How terrible their punishment will be, ver. 28. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*; the utmost degree of grief and indignation; and that which is the cause of it, and contributes to it, is a sight of the happiness of those that are saved; ye shall see the patriarchs and prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. Observe here, (1.) That the *Old Testament saints* are in the kingdom of God; those had benefit by the Messiah, who died before his coming; for they saw his day at a distance, and it reflected comfort upon them. (2.) That *New Testament sinners* will be thrust out of the kingdom of God, it intimates, that they will be thrusting in, and will presume upon admission, but in vain, they shall be thrust out with shame, as having no part or lot in the matter. (3.) That the sight of the saints' glory will be a great aggravation of sinners' misery; they shall thus far see the kingdom of God, that they shall see the prophets in it, whom they hated and despised, and themselves, who thought themselves sure of it, thrust out. This is that at which they will gnash their teeth, Plal. cxii. 10.

4. Think who are they that shall be saved notwithstanding, ver. 29, 36. *They shall come from the east and the west; and the last shall be first*.

1. By what Christ had said, it appeared, that but few should be saved, of those that we think most likely, and that bid fairest for it: Yet, do not say then that the gospel is preached in vain, for though Israel be not gathered, Christ will be glorious. There shall come many from all parts of the Gentile world, that shall be admitted into the kingdom of grace in this world, and of glory in the other. Plainly thus, when we come to heaven, we shall meet a great many there, whom we little thought to have met there; and miss a great many thence, whom we verily expected to have found there.

2. Those that sit down in the kingdom of God, are such as had taken pains to get thither, for they came from far; from the east, and from the west; from the north, and from the south; had passed through different climates, had broke through many difficulties and discouragements, which shews, that they who would enter into that kingdom must strive, as the queen of Sheba, that came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon. They that travel now in the service of God and religion, shall sit down to rest shortly in the kingdom of God.

3. Many that stood fair for heaven, came short, and others, that seemed cast behind, and thrown quite out of the way, will win and wear this prize, and therefore it concerns us to strive to enter. Let us be provoked, as Paul desired the Jews might be, to a holy emulation, by the zeal and forwardness of the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 14. Shall I be outstripped by my juniors? Shall I that started first, and stood nearest, miss of heaven, when others less likely enter into it? If it be got by striving, why should not I strive?

31. ¶ The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. 32. And he said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. 33. Nevertheless, I must walk to day and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. 34. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy

children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not? 35. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: And verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Here is, 1. A suggestion to Christ of his danger, by Herod, now he was in Galilee within Herod's jurisdiction, ver. 31. *Certain of the Pharisees* (for there were those of that sect dispersed all the nation over) they came to Christ, pretending friendship and a concern for his safety, and said, *Get thee out of this country, and depart hence*, for otherwise *Herod will kill thee*, as he did John: Some think those Pharisees had no ground at all for this, that Herod had not given out any words to this purpose, but they framed this lye, to drive him out of Galilee, where he had a great and growing interest, and to drive him into Judea, where they knew there were those that really sought his life. But Christ's answer being directed to Herod himself, it should seem the Pharisees had ground for what they said, and that Herod was enraged against Christ, and designed him a mischief, for the honourable testimony he had born to John Baptist, and to the doctrine of repentance which John preached. Herod was willing to get rid of Christ, out of his dominions; and when he durst not put him to death, he hoped to frighten him away, by sending him this threatening message.

2. His defiance of Herod's rage, and the Pharisees too; he fears neither the one nor the other. *Go ye and tell that fox so*, ver. 32. In calling him a fox, he gives him his true character; for he was subtle as a fox, noted for his craft and treachery, and baseness, and preying, as they say of a fox, furthest from his own den. And though it be a black and ugly character, yet it did not ill become Christ to give it him, nor was it in him a violation of that law, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of the people*: For Christ was a prophet, and prophets always had a liberty of speech, in reproving princes, and great men: Nay, Christ was more than a prophet, he was a King, he was King of kings, and the greatest of men were accountable to him, and therefore it became him to call this proud king by his own name, but it is not to be drawn into an example by us. Go and tell that fox, yea, and this fox too, for so it is in the original τῇ ἀλώπεκι ταύτῃ, that Pharisee, whoever he is, that whispers this in my ear, let him know that I do not fear him, nor regard his menaces: For,

1. I know I must die, and must die shortly; I expect it, and count upon it, the third day, i. e. very shortly; my hour is at hand. Note, It will help us very much above the fear of death, and of them that have the power of death, to make death familiar to us, to expect it, think of it, and converse with it, and see it at the door. If Herod should kill me, he will not surprize me.

2. I know that death will be not only no prejudice to me, but it will be my preferment, and therefore tell him I do not fear him; when I die, I shall be perfected, I shall then have finished the hardest part of my undertaking, I shall have completed my business, τελειῶμαι, I shall be consecrated: when Christ died, he is said to have sanctified himself; he consecrated himself to his priestly office, with his own blood.

3. I know that neither he nor any one else can kill me, till I have done my work. Go and tell him I value not his impotent rage. I will cast out devils, and do cures, to day, and to morrow, i. e. now, and for some little space of time yet to come, in spite of him and all his threats. I must walk, I must go on in my intended journey, and it is not in his power to hinder me, I must go about, as I now do, preaching and healing, to day and to morrow, and the day following. Note, It is good for us to look upon the time we have before us, as but a little, two or three days perhaps may be the utmost, that we may thereby be quickened, to do the work of the day in its day. And it is a comfort to us, in reference to the power and malice of our enemies, that they can have no power to take us off, as long as God has any work for us to do. The witnesses were not slain till they had finished their testimony.

4. I know that Herod can do me no harm, not only because my time is not yet come, but because the place appointed for my death is Jerusalem, which is not within his jurisdiction. It cannot be, that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem, i. e. any where else but at Jerusalem. If a true prophet was put to death, he was prosecuted as a false prophet. Now none undertook to try prophets, and to judge concerning them, but the great Sanhedrin, which always sat at Jerusalem, it was a cause which the inferior courts did not take cognizance of, and therefore if a prophet be put to death, it must be at Jerusalem.

3. His lamentation for Jerusalem, and his denunciation of wrath against that city, ver. 34, 35. This we had, Matt. xxiii. 37, 38, 39. Perhaps this was not said now in Galilee, but the evangelist, not designing to bring it in its proper place, inserts it here, upon occasion of Christ's mentioning his being put to death at Jerusalem.

Note, 1. The wickedness of persons and places, that, more eminently than others, profess religion and relation to God, is, in a particular manner, provoking and grieving to the Lord Jesus. How



How pathetically doth he speak of the sin and ruin of that holy city. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!*

2. Those that enjoy great plenty of the means of grace, if they are not profited by them, many times are prejudiced against them. They that would not hearken to the prophets, nor welcome those whom God sent to them, killed them, and stoned them. If mens corruptions are not conquered, they are provoked.

3. Jesus Christ has shewed himself willing, freely willing, to receive and entertain poor souls that come to him, and put themselves under his protection: *How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, with such care and such tendernefs.*

4. The reason why sinners are not protected and provided for by the Lord Jesus, as the chickens are by the hen, is, because they will not. *I would, I often would, and ye would not.* Christ's willingness aggravates sinners unwillingness, and leaves their blood upon their own heads.

5. The house that Christ leaves, is left desolate. The temple, though richly adorned, though hugely frequented, yet is desolate, if Christ have deserted it, he leaves it to them, they had made an idol of it, and let them take it to themselves, and make their best of it, Christ will trouble it no more.

6. Christ justly withdraws from those that drive him from them. They would not be gathered by him, and therefore saith he, *You shall not see me, you shall not hear me any more:* As Moses said to Pharaoh when he forbid him his presence, *Exod. x. 28, 29.*

7. The judgment of the great day will effectually convince unbelievers that would not now be convinced: Then you will say, *Blessed is he that cometh,* i. e. will be glad to be among those that say so, and *will not see me* to be the Messiah till then, when it is too late.

#### C H A P. XIV.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The cure which our Lord Jesus wrought upon a man that had the dropsy, on the sabbath-day, and his justifying himself therein, against those who were offended at his doing it on that day, ver. 1—6. (2.) A lesson of humility, given to those who were ambitious of the highest rooms, ver. 7—11. (3.) A lesson of charity, to those who feasted the rich, and did not feed the poor, ver. 12—14. (4.) The success of the gospel offer foretold, in the parable of the guests invited to a feast, signifying the rejection of the Jews, and all others, that set their hearts upon this world, and the entertainment of the Gentiles, and all others that come empty of self, to be filled with Christ, ver. 15—24. (5.) The great law of discipleship laid down, with a caution to all that will be Christ's disciples, to undertake it deliberately, and with consideration, and particularly to ministers, to retain their savour, ver. 25—35.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath-day, that they watched him. 2. And behold, there was a certain man before him, which had the dropsy. 3. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? 4. And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go: 5. And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass, or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day? 6. And they could not answer him again to these things.

In this passage of story we find,

1. That the Son of man came eating and drinking, conversing familiarly with all sorts of people; not declining the society of publicans, though they were of ill fame, nor of Pharisees, though they bare him ill will, but accepting the friendly invitations both of the one and of the other; that, if possible, he might do good to both. Here he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees, a ruler it may be, and a magistrate in his country, to eat bread on the sabbath-day, ver. 1. See how favourable God is to us, that he allows us time, even on his own day, for bodily refreshments; and how careful we should be not to abuse that liberty, or turn it into licentiousness: Christ went only to eat bread, to take such refreshment as was necessary on the sabbath-day. Our sabbath-meals must, with a particular care, be guarded against all manner of excess: On sabbath-days we must do as Moses and Jethro did, *eat bread before God*, *Exod. xviii. 12.* and, as is said of the primitive Christians, on the Lord's day, must *eat and drink*, as

those that must pray again before we go to rest; that we may not be unfit for that.

2. That he went about doing good. Wherever he came, he sought opportunities to do good, and not only improved those that fell in his way; here was a certain man before him, which had the dropsy, ver. 2. We do not find that he offered himself, or that his friends offered him, to be Christ's patient, but Christ prevented him with the blessings of his goodness, and before he called he answered him. Note, It is a happy thing to be where Christ is, to be present before him, though we be not presented to him. This man had the dropsy, it is probable, in a high degree, and that he appeared much swelled with it; probably he was some relation of the Pharisee's, that now lodged in his house, which is more likely than that he should be an invited guest at the table.

3. That he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, ver. 1. They watched him. The Pharisee that invited him, it should seem, did it with a design to pick some quarrel with him; if it were so, Christ knew it, and yet went, for he knew himself a match for the most subtil of them, and how to order his steps, with an eye to his observers. Those that are watched had need to be wary. It was, as Dr. Hammond observes, contrary to all laws of hospitality, to seek advantage against one that you invited to be your guest, for such a one you have taken under your protection. These lawyers and Pharisees, like the fowler that lies in wait to ensnare the birds, held their peace, and acted very silently. When Christ asked them whether they thought it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? (and herein he is said to answer them, for it was an answer to their thoughts, and thoughts are words to Jesus Christ) they would say neither *yea*, nor *no*, for their design was to inform against him, not to be informed by him. They would not say, *It was lawful to heal*, for then they would preclude themselves from imputing it to him as a crime: And yet the thing was so plain, and self-evident, that they could not for shame say, it was not lawful. Note, Good men have often been persecuted for doing that, which even their persecutors, if they would but give their consciences leave to speak out, could not but own to be lawful and good. Many a good work Christ did, for which they cast stones at him, and his name.

4. That Christ would not be hindered from doing good, by the opposition and contradiction of sinners, ver. 4. He took him, and healed him, and let him go. Perhaps he took him aside into another room, and healed him there, because he would neither proclaim himself, such was his humility, nor provoke his adversaries, such was his wisdom, his meekness of wisdom. Note, Though we must not be driven off from our duty, by the malice of our enemies, yet we should order the circumstances of it, so as to make it the least offensive. Or, he took him, i. e. he laid hands on him to cure him; *ἐπιλαβόμενος*, *complexus*, he embraced him, took him in his arms, big and unweildy as he was, for so dropical people use to be, and reduced him to shape. The cure of a dropsy, as much as of any disease, one would think should be gradual, yet Christ cured even that disease, perfectly cured it in a moment. He then let him go, lest the Pharisees should fall upon him for being healed, though he was purely passive; for what absurdities would not such men as they were be guilty of?

5. That our Lord Jesus did nothing but what he could justify to the conviction and confusion of those that quarrelled with him, ver. 5, 6. He still answered their thoughts, and made them hold their peace for shame, who before held their peace for subtilty, by an appeal to their own practice, as he had been used to do upon such occasions, that he might shew them, how in condemning him, they condemned themselves; which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, by accident, will he not pull him out on the sabbath-day? and that straightway, not deferring it till the sabbath be over, lest it perish. Observe, It is not so much out of compassion to the poor creature, that they do it, but a concern for their own interest. It is their own ox, and their own ass that is worth money, that they will dispense with the law of the sabbath for the saving of. Now this was an evidence of their hypocrisy, and that it was not out of any real regard to the sabbath, that they found fault with Christ for healing on the sabbath-day, that was only the pretence, but really they were angry at the miraculous good works, which Christ wrought, the proof he thereby gave of his divine mission, and the interest he thereby gained among the people. Many can easily dispense with that for their own interest, which they cannot dispense with for God's glory and the good of their brethren. This question silenced them, they could not answer him again to these things, ver. 6. Christ will be justified when he speaks, and every mouth stopped before him.

7. ¶ And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, 8. When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room: lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; 9. And he that bade thee and him, come and say to thee, Give this man place;



place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. 10. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. 11. For whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted. 12. ¶ Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. 13. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14. And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Our Lord Jesus here sets us an example of profitable, edifying discourse at our tables, when we are in company with our friends. We find him when he had none but his disciples, that were his own family, with him at his table, his discourse with them was good, and to the use of edifying; and not only so, but when he was in company with strangers, nay, with enemies that watched him, he took occasion to reprove what he saw amiss in them, and to instruct them; though the wicked were before him, he did not keep silence from good, (as David did) *Psal. xxxix. 1, 2.* for notwithstanding the provocation given him, he had not his heart hot within him, nor was his spirit stirred. We must not only not allow any corrupt communication at our tables, such as that of the hypocritical mockers at feasts, but we must not content ourselves with common, harmless talk, but we should take occasion from God's goodness to us at our tables, to speak well of him, and learn to spiritualize common things. The lips of the righteous should then feed many.

Our Lord Jesus was among persons of quality, yet as one that had not respect of persons,

First, He takes occasion to reprove the guests for striving to sit uppermost, and from thence gives us a lesson of humility.

1. He observed how these lawyers and Pharisees affected the highest seats, towards the head-end of the table, *ver. 7.* He had charged that sort of men with this, in general, *Luke xi.* here he brings home the charge to particular persons; for Christ will give every man his own. He marked how they chose out the chief rooms, every man as he came in got as near the best seat as he could. Note, Even in the common actions of life, Christ's eye is upon us, and he marks what we do, not only in our religious assemblies, but at our tables, and makes remarks upon it.

2. He observed how those who were thus aspiring, oftentimes exposed themselves, and came off with a slur; whereas those that were modest, and seated themselves in the lowest seats, oftentimes gained respect by it. (1.) Those that when they come in, assume the highest seats, perhaps may be degraded, and forced to come down, to give place to one more honourable, *ver. 8, 9.* Note, It ought to check our high thoughts of ourselves, to think how many there are that are more honourable than we, not only in respect of worldly dignities, but personal merits and accomplishments. Instead of being proud that so many give place to us, it should be humbling to us, that there are so many that we must give place to. The master of the feasts will marshal his guests, and will not see the more honourable kept out of the seat that is his due, and therefore will make bold to take him lower that usurped it, *Give this man place*; and this will be a disgrace to him that would be thought more deserving than really he was, before all the company. Note, Pride will have shame, and will at last have a fall. (2.) Those that when they come in, content themselves with the lowest seats, are likely to be preferred, *ver. 10.* Go and seat thyself in the lowest room, as taking it for granted, that thy friend who invited thee has guests to come, that are of better rank and quality than thou art; but perhaps it may not prove so, and then it will be said to thee, *Friend, go up higher.* The master of the feast will be so just to thee, as not to keep thee at the lower end of the table, because thou wast so modest as to seat thyself there. Note, The way to rise high is to begin low; and this recommends a man to those about him. *Thou shalt have honour and respect before those that sit with thee.* They will see thee to be an honourable man, beyond what at first they thought, and honour appears the brighter for shining out of obscurity. And they will likewise see thee to be a humble man, which is the greatest honour of all. Our Saviour here refers to that advice of Solomon, *Prov. xxv. 6, 7.* *Stand not in the place of great men, for better is it that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, than that thou shouldest be put lower.* And Dr. Lightfoot quotes a parable out of one of the rabbins, somewhat like this, Three men (said he) were bidden to a feast; one sat highest, for, said he, I am a prince; the other next, for, said he, I am a wife man; the other lowest, for, said he, I am a humble man. The king seated the humble man highest, and put the prince lowest.

No. xci.

3. He applied this generally, and would have us all learn not to mind high things, but to content ourselves with mean things; as for other reasons, so for this, because pride and ambition are disgraceful before men, for *whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased*; but humility and self-denial are really honourable, *he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted*, *ver. 11.* We see it in other instances, that a man's pride will bring him low, but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit; and before honour is humility.

Secondly, He takes occasion to reprove the master of the feast, for inviting so many rich people, who had wherewithal to dine very well at home, when he should rather have invited the poor, or which was all one, have sent portions to them, for whom nothing is prepared, and who could not afford themselves a good meal's meat. See *Neb. viii. 10.* And our Saviour here teacheth us, that the using of what we have in works of charity, is better, and will turn to a better account, than using it in works of generosity, and in magnificent house-keeping.

1. Covet not to treat the rich, *ver. 12.* invite not thy friends, and brethren, and neighbours, that are rich. This doth not prohibit the entertaining of such, there may be occasion for it, for the cultivating of friendship among relations and neighbours. But, (1.) Do not use it; spend as little as thou canst that way, that thou mayest not disabuse thyself to lay out a much better way, in almsgiving. Thou wilt find it very expensive and troublesome; one feast for the rich, will make a great many meals for the poor, Solomon saith, *He that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want*, *Prov. xxii. 16.* Give (saith Pliny, *Epist.*) to thy friends, but let it be to thy poor friends, not to those that need thee not. (2.) Be not proud of it. Many make feasts only to make a shew, as Ahasuerus did, *Esth. i. 3, 4.* and it is no reputation to them, they think, if they have not persons of quality to dine with them, and thus rob their families to please their fancies. (3.) Aim not at being paid again in your own coin. This is that which our Saviour blames in making such entertainments, you commonly do it in hopes you will be invited by them, and so a recompence will be made you; you will be gratified with such dainties and varieties as you treat your friends with, and this will feed your sensuality and luxury, and you will be no real gainer at last.

2. Be forward to relieve the poor, *ver. 13, 14.* When thou makest a feast, instead of furnishing thyself with what is rare and nice, get thy table spread with a competency of plain and wholesome meat, which will not be so costly, and invite the poor and maimed; such as have nothing to live upon, nor are able to work for their living. These are objects of charity, they want necessities, furnish them, and they will recompense thee with their prayers; they will commend thy provisions, which the rich it may be will despise. They will go away and thank God for thee, when the rich will go away and reproach thee. Say not thou art a loser, because they cannot recompense thee, thou art so much out of pocket, no, it is so much set out to the best interest, on the best security, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. There will be a resurrection of the just; a future state of the just. There is a state of happiness reserved for them in the other world: and we may be sure the charitable will be remembered in the resurrection of the just, for alms are righteousness. Works of charity perhaps may not be rewarded in this world, for the things of this world are not the best things, and therefore God doth not pay the best men in those things; but they shall in no wise lose their reward; they shall be recompensed in the resurrection. And it will be found that the longest voyages make the richest returns, and the charitable will be no losers, but unspeakable gainers, by having their recompence adjourned till the resurrection.

15. ¶ And when one of them that sat at meat with him, heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. 16. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: 17. And sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. 18. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. 19. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. 20. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. 21. So that servant came and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. 22. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. 23. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the high-ways, and hedges, and compel them to come



in, that my house may be filled. 24. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.

Here is another discourse of our Saviour's, in which he *spiritualizeth* the feast he was invited to; which is another way of keeping up good discourse, in the midst of common actions.

1. The occasion of the discourse was given by one of the guests, who, when Christ was giving rules about feasting, said to him, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*, ver. 15. which some tell us was a saying commonly used among the rabbins. But with what design doth this man bring it in here? (1.) Perhaps this man, observing that Christ reproved first the guests, and then the master of the house, fearing he should put the company out of humour, started this, to *divert* the discourse to something else. Or, (2.) Admiring the good rules of humility and charity which Christ had now given, but despairing to see them lived up to in the present degenerate state of things, he longs for *the kingdom of God*, when these and other good laws shall obtain, and pronounceth them *blessed*, who shall have a place in that kingdom. Or, (3.) Christ having mentioned *the resurrection of the just*, as a recompence for acts of charity to the poor, he here confirms what he had said, yea, Lord, they that shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, shall *eat bread in the kingdom*, and that is a greater recompence than being re-invited to the table of the greatest man on earth. Or, (4.) Observing Christ to be silent after he had given the foregoing lessons, he was willing to draw him in again to further discourse, so wonderfully well-pleased was he with what he said; and he knew nothing more likely to engage him, than to mention the *kingdom of God*. Note, Those that are not of ability to carry on good discourse themselves, yet ought to put in a word now and then to countenance it, and help it forwards.

Now that which this man said, was a plain and acknowledged truth, and it was quoted very *appositely* now they were *sitting at meat*; for we should take occasion from common things, to think and speak of those heavenly and spiritual things which in scripture are *compared* to them; for that is one end of borrowing similitudes from them. And it will be good for us, when we are receiving the gifts of God's providence, to pass through them to the consideration of the gifts of his grace, those *better things*. This thought will be very seasonable when we are partaking of bodily refreshments, *Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*. (1.) In the kingdom of grace, in the kingdom of the Messiah, which was expected now shortly to be set up. Christ promised his disciples that they should *eat and drink with him in his kingdom*. They that partake of the Lord's supper, *eat bread in the kingdom of God*. (2.) In the kingdom of glory, at the resurrection. The happiness of heaven is an *everlasting feast*; blessed are they that shall sit down at that table, whence they shall rise no more.

2. The parable which our Lord Jesus put forth upon this occasion, ver. 16, &c. Christ joins with the good man in what he said; it is very true, *Blessed are they that shall partake* of the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom. But who are they that shall enjoy that privilege? You Jews that think to have the monopoly of it, will generally reject it, and the Gentiles will be the greatest sharers in it. This he shews by a parable, for if he had spoken it plainly the Pharisees would not have born it.

Now in the parable we may observe,

1. The free-grace and mercy of God, shining in the gospel of Christ; it appears, (1.) In the rich provision he has made for poor souls, for their nourishment, refreshment, and entertainment, ver. 16. *A certain rich man made a great supper*. There is that in Christ and the grace of the gospel, which will be *food* and a *feast* for the soul of man, that knows its own capacities, for the soul of a sinner, that knows its own necessities and miseries. It is called a *supper*, because in those countries supper-time was the chief feasting-time, when the business of the day was over. The manifestation of the gospel-grace to the world was the evening of the world's day. And the fruition of the fulness of that grace in heaven is reserved for the evening of our day. (2.) In the gracious invitation given us to come and partake of this provision. Here is, (1.) A general invitation given, he *bade many*. Christ invited the whole nation and people of the Jews to partake of the benefits of his gospel. There is provision enough for as many as come, it was prophesied of, as *a feast for all people*, Isa. xxv. 6. Christ in the gospel, as he keeps a *good house*, so he keeps an *open house*. (2.) A particular memorandum given, when the supper-time was at hand; the servant was sent round to put them in mind of it, *Come, for all things are now ready*. When the Spirit was poured out, and the gospel-church planted, those who before were invited, were more closely pressed to come in *presently*, now *all things are ready*, the full discovery of the gospel mystery is now made, all the ordinances of the gospel are now instituted, the society of Christians is now incorporated, and, which crowns all, the Holy Ghost is now given. This is the call now given to us, *All things are now ready*, now is the *accepted time*, it is now and *has not been long*, it is now and *will*

*not be long*; it is a season of grace that will be soon over; and therefore *come now*; do not delay; accept the invitation; believe yourselves welcome; *eat, O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved*.

2. The cold entertainment which the grace of the gospel meets with. The invited guests declined coming, they did not say flat and plain they *would not come*, but *they all with one consent began to make excuse*, ver. 18. One would have expected they should *all with one consent* have come to a good supper, when they were so kindly invited to it, who would have refused such an invitation? Yet, on the contrary, they all found out some pretence or other to shift off their attendance. This speaks the general neglect of the Jewish nation to close with Christ, and accept of the offers of his grace, and the contempt they put upon the invitation. It speaks also the backwardness there is in most people to close with the gospel-call. They cannot for shame avow their refusal, but they desire to be *excused*; they all *ἐπὶ μὲν*, some supply *ῥησις*, *all straightway*, they could give an answer *extempore*; and needed not to study for it; were *not to seek* for an excuse. Others supply *ἁπλως*, they were unanimous in it; *with one voice*.

(1.) Here were *two* were *purchasers*, and were in such haste to go see their purchases, that they could not find time to go to this supper. One had *purchased land*, he had *bought a piece of ground*, which was represented to him to be a good bargain, and he must needs *go see* whether it was so or no, and therefore *I pray thee have me excused*. His heart was so much upon the enlarging of his estate, that he could neither be civil to his friend, nor kind to himself. Note, Those that have their hearts full of the world, and fond of *laying house to house, and field to field*, have their ears deaf to the gospel-invitation. But what a frivolous excuse was this! he might have deferred going to see his piece of ground till the next day, and have found it in the same place and plight it was now in, if he had so pleased. Here was another had *purchased stock* for his land, *I have bought five yoke of oxen* for the plough, and I must just now *go prove them*, must go try whether they be fit for my purpose, and therefore excuse me for this time. The former intimates that inordinate *complacency* in the world, this, that inordinate *care and concern* about the world, which keeps people from Christ and his grace; both intimate a preference given to the body above the soul, and to the things of time above those of eternity. Note, It is an ill thing, when we are called to any duty, to make excuses for our neglect of it. It is a sign there are convictions that it is duty, but no inclination to it. These things here that were the matter of the excuses, were, (1.) *Little things*, and of small concern. It had better become them to have said, I am invited to *eat bread in the kingdom of God*, and therefore must be excused from going to see the *ground* or the *oxen*. (2.) *Lawful things*. Note, Things lawful in themselves, when the heart is too much set upon them, prove fatal hindrances in religion, *Licitis perimus omnes*. It is a hard matter so to manage our worldly affairs, that they may not divert us from spiritual pursuits; and this ought to be our great care.

(2.) Here was one that was *newly married*, and could not leave his wife to go out to supper, no not for once, ver. 20. *I have married a wife, and therefore, in short, I cannot come*. He pretends he *cannot*, when the truth is he *will not*. Thus many pretend *inability* for the duties of religion, when really they have an *aversion* to them. He has *married a wife*; it is true, he that was married was excused by the law, from going to war for the first year, Deut. xxiv. 5. but would that excuse him from going up to the feasts of the Lord, which all the males were yearly to attend? much less will it excuse from the gospel-feast, which the other were but types of. Note, Our affection to our relations often proves a hindrance to us in our duty to God. Adam's excuse was, *The woman that thou gavest me, persuaded me to eat*; this here was, *the woman persuaded me not to eat*. He might have gone, and taken his wife along with him, they should both have been welcome.

3. The account which was brought to the master of the feast, of the affront put upon him by his friends whom he had invited, who now showed how little they valued him, ver. 21. *That servant came, and shewed his lord these things*; told him with surprise, that he was likely to sup alone, for the guests that were invited, though they had had timely notice a good while before, that they might order their affairs accordingly, yet were now engaged to some other business. He made the matter neither better nor worse, but related it just as it was. Note, Ministers must give account of the success of their ministry. They must do it now at the throne of grace, if they see of *the travel of their soul*, they must go to God with their *thanks*; if they *labour in vain*, they must go to God with their *complaints*: They will do it hereafter at the judgment-seat of Christ; they shall be produced as witnesses *against* those who persist and perish in their unbelief, to prove that they were fairly invited: and for those who accepted the call, *Behold, I and the children thou hast given me*. The apostle urges this as a reason why people should give ear to the word of God sent them by his ministers; for *they watch for your souls, as those that must give account*, Heb. xiii. 17.



4. The master's just resentment of this affront; *he was angry*, ver. 21. Note, The ingratitude of those that slight gospel offers, and the contempt they put upon the God of heaven thereby, is a very great provocation to him, and justly so. Abused mercy turns into the greatest wrath. The doom he passed upon them was, *None of the men that were bidden shall taste of my supper*. This was like the doom passed upon ungrateful Israel, when they despised the pleasant land. God *swore in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest*. Note, Grace despised is grace forfeited, like Esau's birth-right. They that will not have Christ when they may, shall not have him when they would. Even those that were bidden, if they slight the invitation, shall be forbidden; when the door is shut, the foolish virgins will be denied entrance.

5. The care that was taken to furnish the table with guests, as well as meat. Go, (saith he to the servants) *Go, first, into the streets and lanes of the city*, and invite, not the merchants that are going from the custom-house, or the tradesmen that are shutting up their shops, they will *desire to be excused*: One is going to his counting-house to cast up his books, another to the tavern to drink a bottle with his friend; but that you may invite those that will be glad to come, bring in *hither the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind*; pick up the common beggars. The servants object not that it will be a disparagement to the master and his house to have such guests at his table, for they knew his mind, and they soon gather enough such guests. *Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded*. Many of the Jews are brought in, not of the scribes and Pharisees, such as Christ was *now at dinner with*, who thought themselves most likely to be guests at the Messiah's table, but publicans and sinners, these are *the poor and the maimed*. But yet there is room for more guests, and provision enough for them all. Go then, (2.) *Into the highways and hedges*; go out into the country, and pick up the vagrants, or those that are returning now in the evening from their work in the field, from hedging and ditching there, and *compel them to come in*, not by force of arms, but by force of arguments; be earnest with them, for in this case it would be necessary to convince them that the invitation was *sincere*, and not a banter; they will be shy and modest, and will hardly believe that they shall be welcome, and therefore be importunate with them, and do not leave them till you have prevailed with them. This refers to the *calling of the Gentiles*, to whom the apostles were to turn when the Jews refused the offer, and with them the church was filled.

Now observe here, (1.) That the provision made for precious souls in the gospel of Christ, shall appear not to have been made in vain; for if some *reject it*, yet others will thankfully *accept* the offer of it. Christ comforts himself with this, that *though Israel be not gathered*, yet he shall be *glorious*, as *a light to the Gentiles*, Isa. xlv. 5, 6. God will have a church in the world, though there are those that are unchurched, for *the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of none effect*. (2.) Those that are very poor and low in the world, shall be as welcome to Christ as the rich and great; nay, and many times the gospel has greatest success among those that labour under worldly disadvantages, as the *poor*, and bodily infirmities, as *the maimed, and the halt, and the blind*. Christ here plainly refers to what he had said just before in direction to us, to invite to our tables *the poor and maimed, the lame and blind*, ver. 13. For the consideration of the countenance which Christ's gospel gives to the poor, should engage us to be charitable to them. His condescensions and compassions towards them, should engage ours. (3.) Many times the gospel hath the *greatest success* among those that are *least likely* to have the benefit of it, and whose submission to it was least expected: The publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before the scribes and Pharisees; *so the last shall be first, and the first last*. Let us not be confident concerning those that are most forward, nor despair of those that are least promising. (4.) Christ's ministers must be both very expeditious, and very importunate in inviting to the gospel-feast. *Go out quickly*, ver. 21. lose no time, because *all things are now ready*: Call to them to come to day, while it is called to day. And *compel them to come in* by speaking them fair, and *drawing them with the cords of a man, and the bands of love*. Nothing can be more absurd than fetching an argument from hence for compelling mens consciences, nay, for compelling men against their consciences in matters of religion: You shall receive the Lord's supper, or you shall be fined and imprisoned, and ruined in your estate. Certainly nothing like this was the compulsion here meant, but only that of reason and love, for *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal*. (5.) Though many have been brought in to partake of the benefits of the gospel, yet still *there is room for more*; for the riches of Christ are *unsearchable*, and *inexhaustible*; there is in him enough for all, and enough for each; and the gospel excludes none that do not exclude themselves. (6.) Christ's house, though it be *large*, it shall at last be *filled*, it will be so when the number of the elect is completed, and as many as were *given him*, are brought to him.

25. ¶ And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, 26. If any man

come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28. For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish it? 29. Lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it, begin to mock him, 30. Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31. Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32. Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. 33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. 34. ¶ Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35. It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghil; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

See how Christ, in his doctrine, suited himself to those to whom he spake, and *gave every one their portion of meat*. To Pharisees he preached humility and charity: He is, in these verses, directing his discourse to the multitudes that crowded after him, and seemed zealous in following him, and his exhortation to them is to understand the terms of discipleship, before they undertook the profession of it, and to consider what they did. See here,

1. How zealous people were in their attendance on Christ, ver. 25. *There went great multitudes with him*, many for love, and more for company, for where there are many, there will be more. Here was a *mixt multitude*, like that which went with Israel out of Egypt; such we must expect there will always be in the church, and it will therefore be necessary that ministers should carefully separate *between the precious and the vile*.

2. How considerate he would have them to be in their zeal: Those that undertake to follow Christ, must count upon the worst, and prepare accordingly.

1. He tells them what the worst is they must count upon; much the same with what he had gone through before them, and for them. He takes it for granted they had a mind to be *his disciples*, that they might be *qualified* for preferment in his kingdom: They expected he should say, If any man come to me, and be my disciple, he shall have wealth and honour in abundance, let me alone to make him a great man; but he tells them the quite contrary.

(1.) That they must be willing to *quit* that which was *very dear*, and therefore must come to him thoroughly *weaned from* all their creature-comforts, and *dead* to them, so as cheerfully to part with them, rather than quit their interest in Christ, ver. 26. A man cannot be Christ's disciple, but he must *hate father and mother, and his own life*. He is not *sincere*, he will not be *constant* and persevering, unless he love Christ better than any thing in this world, and be willing to part with that which he may and must leave, either as a *sacrifice*, when Christ may be glorified by our parting with it; so the martyrs, who *loved not their lives to death*; or as a *temptation*, when by our parting with it we are put into a better capacity of serving Christ: Thus Abraham parted with his own country, and Moses with Pharaoh's court. Mention is not made here of *houses and lands*; philosophy will teach a man to look upon those with contempt; but Christianity carries it higher. (1.) Every good man loves *his relations*, and yet if he be a disciple of Christ he must comparatively *hate them*, must love them *less than Christ*, as Leah is said to be *hated*, when Rachel was better loved. Not that their persons must be in any degree hated, but our comfort and satisfaction in them must be lost and swallowed up in our love to Christ, as Levi's was when he *said to his father, I have not seen him*, Deut. xxxiii. 9. When our duty to our parents comes in competition with our evident duty to Christ, we must give Christ the preference. If we must either *deny Christ*, or be *banished* from our families and relations, (as many of the primitive Christians were) we must rather lose their society than his favour. (2.) Every man loves *his own life*, no man ever yet *hated it*; and we cannot be Christ's disciples if we do not love him better than our own lives, so as rather to have our lives *embittered* by cruel *bondage*, nay, and *taken away* by cruel *deaths*, than to dishonour Christ, or depart from any of his truths and ways. The experience of the pleasures of the *spiritual life*, and the believing hopes and prospects of *eternal life*, will make this *hard saying* easy. When tribulation and persecution ariseth, because of the word, then chiefly the trial is, whether we love better, Christ, or our relations and lives; yet even in *days of peace* this matter is sometimes brought to the trial. Those that decline the service



service of Christ, and opportunities of converse with him, and are ashamed to confess him, for fear of disoblighing a relation or friend, or losing a customer, give cause to suspect they love them better than Christ.

(2.) That they must be willing to *bear* that which was very heavy, ver. 27. *Whoever doth not carry his cross*, as those did that were condemned to be crucified, in *submission* to the sentence, and in *expectation* of the execution of it, and so *come after me*, whithersoever I shall lead him, he *cannot be my disciple*, that is, (saith Dr. Hammond) he is not *for my turn*, and my service being so sure to bring persecution along with it, will not be *for his*. Though the disciples of Christ are not *all crucified*, yet they all *bear their cross*, as if they counted upon being crucified. They must be content to be put into an ill name, and to be loaded with infamy and disgrace, for no name more ignominious than *furcifer*, the bearer of the gibbet. He must bear his cross and *come after Christ*, i. e. he must bear it in the way of his duty, whenever it lies in that way. He must bear it when Christ calls him to it, and in bearing it he must have an eye to Christ, and fetch encouragements from him, and live in hope of a recompence with him.

2. He bids them count upon it, and then consider of it: Since he has been so *just to us*, as to tell us plainly what difficulties we shall meet with in following him, let us be so *just to ourselves* as to weigh the matter seriously before we take upon us a profession of religion. Joshua obliged the people to consider what they did, when they promised to *serve the Lord*, Josh. xxiv. 19. It is better never begin than not proceed, and therefore before we begin, we must consider what it is to proceed. This is to act rationally, and as becomes men, and as we do in other cases. And the cause of Christ will bear a scrutiny: Satan shews the best, but hides the worst; because his best will not countervail his worst; but Christ will abundantly. Thus considering of the case is necessary to perseverance, especially in suffering times. Our Saviour here illustrates the necessity of it by two similitudes: The former shewing that we must consider the expences of our religion, the latter, that we must consider the perils of it.

1. When we take upon us a profession of religion, we are like a man that undertakes to *build a tower*, and therefore must consider the *expence of it*, ver. 28, 29, 30. *Which of you intending to build a tower*, or stately house for himself, *sitteth not down first and counteth the cost*, and he must be sure to count upon a great deal more than his workmen will tell him it will lie him in: Let him compare the charge with his purse, lest he make himself to be laughed at, by *beginning to build* what he is *not able to finish*. Note, 1. All that take upon them a profession of religion, undertake to *build a tower*, not as the tower of Babel, in opposition to heaven, which therefore was left unfinished, but in obedience to heaven, which therefore shall have its *top stone brought forth*. Begin low, and lay the foundation deep, lay it on the rock, and make sure work, and then aim as high as heaven. 2. Those that intend to build this tower, must *sit down and count the cost*; let them consider, it *will cost them* the mortifying of their sins, even the most beloved lusts, it will cost them a life of self-denial and watchfulness, and a constant course of holy duties: It *may*, perhaps, *cost them* their reputation among men, their estates and liberties, and all that is dear to them in this world, even life itself. And if it cost us all this, what is it, in comparison with what it cost Christ to purchase the advantages of religion for us, which come to us without money and price? 3. Many that begin to *build this tower*, do not *go on with it*, nor persevere in it, and it is their folly; they have not courage and resolution, have not a rooted, fixed principle, and so bring nothing to pass. It is true, we have none of us, in ourselves, *sufficient to finish* this tower, but Christ hath said, *my grace is sufficient for thee*, and that grace shall not be wanting to any of us, if we seek for it, and make use of it. 4. Nothing is more *shameful*, than for those that have begun well in religion, to break off; every one will justly *mock him*; as having lost all his labour hitherto, for want of perseverance. *We lose the things we have wrought*, 2 John 8. and all we have done and suffered is in vain, Gal. iii. 4, 5.

2. When we undertake to be Christ's disciples, we are like a man that *goes to war*, and therefore must consider the *hazard* of it, and the difficulties that are to be encountered, ver. 31, 32. A king that proclaims war with a neighbouring prince, considers whether he have strength wherewith to make his party good, and if not, he will lay aside his thoughts of war. Note, 1. The state of a Christian in this world is a military state, *Is not the Christian life a warfare?* We have many passes in our way, that must be disputed with dint of sword; nay, we must fight every step we go, so restless are our spiritual enemies, in their opposition. 2. We ought to consider whether we can *endure the hardness* which a good soldier of Jesus Christ must expect and count upon, before we list ourselves under Christ's banner: *Whether we are able to encounter the forces of hell and earth*, which come against us *twenty thousand strong*. 3. Of the two, it is better make the best terms we can with the world, than pretend to renounce it, and afterwards, when tribulation and persecution ariseth because of the word, to *return to it*. That *young man* that could not find in his heart to part with his possessions for Christ,

did better to go away from Christ *sorrowing*, than to have staid with him *dissembling*.

This parable is another way applicable, and may be taken as designed to teach us to begin *speedily* to be religious; rather than to begin *cautiously*; and may mean the same with *Matt. v. 25. Agree with thine adversary quickly*. Note, (1.) Those that persist in sin, make war against God, the most unnatural, unjustifiable war; they rebel against their lawful sovereign, whose government is perfectly just and good. (2.) The proudest and most daring sinner is no equal match for God; the disproportion of strength is much greater than that here supposed between *ten thousand* and *twenty thousand*. *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?* *Are we stronger than he*, no sure; *who knows the power of his anger?* In consideration of this it is our interest to make peace with him; we need not send to *desire conditions of peace*, they are offered to us, and are unexceptionable, and highly to our advantage; let us acquaint ourselves with them, and be at peace; do this in time, *while the other is yet a great way off*, for delays, in such a case, are highly dangerous, and make after applications difficult.

But the application of this parable here, ver. 33. is to the consideration that ought to be, when we take upon us a profession of religion. Solomon saith, *with good advice make war*, Prov. xx. 18. for he that *draws the sword, throws away the scabbard*; so with *good advice* enter upon a profession of religion, as those that know that *except you forsake all you have, you cannot be Christ's disciples*, that is, except you count upon forsaking all, and consent to it, for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must *suffer persecution*, and yet continue to *live godly*.

3. He warns them against apostasy, and a degeneracy of mind from the truly Christian spirit and temper, for that would make them utterly useless, ver. 34, 35. (1.) Good Christians are the *salt of the earth*, and good ministers especially, *Matt. v. 13.* and this *salt is good*, and of great use; by their instructions and examples they season all they converse with, to keep them from putrefying, and to quicken them and make them *favoury*. (2.) Degenerate Christians, that rather than part with what they have in the world, will throw up their profession, and then of course become carnal and worldly, and wholly destitute of a Christian spirit, they are like *salt that has lost its savour*; like that which the chymists call the *caput mortuum*, that has all its salts drawn from it, that is the most useless, worthless thing in the world; it has no manner of virtue or good property in it. (1.) It can never be recovered, *wherewith shall it be seasoned?* You cannot salt it? this intimates, that it is extremely difficult, and next to impossible to recover an apostate, *Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.* If Christianity will not prevail to cure men of their worldliness and sensuality, if that remedy have been tried in vain, their case must even be concluded desperate. (2.) It is of no use; it is *not fit*, as dung is, *for the land to manure that*, nor will it be the better if it be laid in the dunghil to rot, there is nothing to be got out of it. A professor of religion, whose mind and manners are depraved, is the most *insipid* animal that can be. If he do speak of the things of God, which he hath had some knowledge of, it is so *awkwardly* that none are the better for it: It is a *parable in the mouth of a fool*. (3.) It is abandoned; *men cast it out*, as that which they will have no more to do with. Such scandalous professors ought to be cast out of the church, not only because they have forfeited all the honours and privileges of their church-membership, but because there is danger that others will be infected by them. Our Saviour concludes this with a call to all to take notice of it, and to take warning; *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. Now can the faculty of hearing be better employed, than in attending to the word of Christ, and particularly to the alarms he has given us, of the danger we are in of apostasy, and the danger we run ourselves into by apostasy.

## C H A P. XV.

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws; so in this chapter, the murmuring of the scribes and Pharisees at the grace of Christ, and the favour he shewed to publicans and sinners, gave occasion for a more full discovery of that grace, than perhaps otherwise we should have had, in these three parables which we have in this chapter, the scope of all which is the same, to shew, not only what God had said and sworn in the Old Testament, that he had no pleasure in the death and ruin of sinners, but that he has great pleasure in their return and repentance, and rejoiceth in the gracious entertainment he gives them thereupon. Here is, (1.) The offence which the Pharisees took at Christ, for conversing with *heathen men and publicans*, and preaching his gospel to them, ver. 1, 2. (2.) His justifying himself in it, by the design and proper tendency of it, and which with many had been the effect of it, and that was, the bringing of them to repent and reform their lives, than which there could not be a more pleasing and acceptable service done to God, which he shews in the parable, (1.) Of the lost sheep that was brought home with joy, ver. 4-7. (2.) Of



(2.) *Of the lost silver, that was found with joy, ver. 8—10.*  
 (3.) *Of the lost son that had been a prodigal, but returned to his father's house, and was received with great joy, though his elder brother, like these scribes and Pharisees, was offended at it, ver. 11—32.*

**T**HEN drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. 2. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. 3. ¶ And he spake this parable unto them, saying, 4. What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? 5. And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. 7. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. 8. ¶ Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? 9. And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. 10. Likewise I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.

Here is, 1. The diligent attendance of the publicans and sinners upon Christ's ministry. *Great multitudes of Jews went with him, chap. xiv. 25.* with such an assurance of admission into the kingdom of God, that he found it requisite to say that to them which would shake their vain hopes: Here multitudes of publicans and sinners drew near to him, with a humble modest fear of being rejected by him, and to them he found it requisite to give encouragement, especially because there were some haughty supercilious people that frowned upon them. The publicans that collected the tribute paid to the Romans, were perhaps some of them ill men, but they were all industriously put into an ill name, because of the prejudices of the Jewish nation against their office; they are sometimes ranked with *harlots*, Matt. xxi. 32. here and elsewhere with sinners, such as were openly vicious, that traded with *harlots*; known rakes. Some think the sinners here were *heathens*, and that Christ was now on the other side Jordan, or in Galilee of the Gentiles. These drew near, when perhaps the multitude of the Jews, that had followed him, were (upon his discourse in the close of the foregoing chapter) dropt off; thus afterwards the Gentiles took their turn in hearing the apostles, when the Jews had rejected them. They drew near to hear him; being afraid of drawing nearer than just to come within hearing. They drew near to him, not as some did, for curiosity, to see him, nor as others did, to solicit for cures, but to hear his excellent doctrine. Note, In all our approaches to Christ, this we must have in our eye, to hear him; to hear the instructions he gives us, and his answers to our prayers.

2. The offence which the scribes and Pharisees took at this, ver. 2. they murmured, and turned it to the reproach of our Lord Jesus, *This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.* (1.) They were angry that publicans and heathens had the means of grace allowed them, were called to repent, and encouraged to hope for pardon upon repentance; for they looked upon their case as desperate, and that none but Jews had the privilege of repenting and being pardoned, though the prophets preached repentance to the nations, and Daniel particularly to Nebuchadnezzar. (2.) They thought it a disparagement to Christ, and inconsistent with the dignity of his character, to make himself familiar with such sort of people; to admit them into his company, and to eat with them. They could not for shame condemn him for preaching to them, though that was the thing they were most enraged at, and therefore they reproached him for eating with them, which was more expressly contrary to the tradition of the elders. Censure will fall, not only upon the most innocent and the most excellent persons, but upon the most innocent and most excellent actions, and we must not think it strange.

3. Christ's justifying of himself in it, by shewing that the worse these people were to whom he preached, the more glory would redound to God, and the more joy there would be in heaven, if by his preaching they were brought to repentance. It would be a more pleasing sight in heaven, to see Gentiles brought to the worship of the true God, than to see Jews go on in it; and to see publicans and sinners live an orderly sort of life, than to see scribes and Pharisees go on in living such a life. This he

here illustrates by two parables, the reddition of both which is the same.

First, The parable of the lost sheep. Something like it we had, Matt. xviii. 12. there it was designed to shew the care God takes for the preservation of faints, as a reason why we should not offend them; here it is designed to shew the pleasure God takes in the conversion of finners, as a reason why we should rejoice in it. We have here,

1. The case of a sinner that goes on in sinful ways, he is like a lost sheep; a sheep gone astray; lost to God, who has not the honour and service he should have from him; lost to the flock, that has not communion with him; lost to himself, he knows not where he is, wanders endlessly, is continually exposed to the beasts of prey, subject to frights and terrors, from under the shepherd's care, and wanting the green pastures; and it cannot of itself find the way back to the fold.

2. The care the God of heaven takes of poor wandring sinners. He continues his care of the sheep that did not go astray, they are safe in the wilderness; but there is a particular care to be taken of this lost sheep; and though he has a hundred sheep, a considerable flock, yet he will not lose that one; but he goes after it, and shews abundance of care, (1.) In finding it out; he follows it, enquiring after it, and looking about for it, until he finds it; God follows backsliding sinners with the calls of his word, and the strivings of his Spirit, until at length they are wrought upon to think of returning. (2.) In bringing it home; though he finds it weary, and perhaps worried and worn away with its wandrings, and not able to bear being driven home, yet he doth not leave it to perish, and say, it is not worth carrying home; but lays it on his shoulders, and, with a great deal of tenderness and labour, brings it to the fold. This is very applicable to the great work of our redemption; mankind was gone astray, Isa. liii. 6. The value of the whole race to God was not so much as that of one sheep to him that had a hundred; what loss would it have been to God, if they had all been left to perish? There is a world of holy angels that are as the ninety-nine sheep, a noble flock, yet God sends his Son to seek and save that which was lost, Luk. xix. 10. Christ is said to gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, noting his pity and tenderness towards poor sinners; here he is said to bear them upon his shoulders, noting the power wherewith he supports and bears them up; those can never perish whom he carries upon his shoulders.

3. The pleasure that God takes in repenting, returning sinners; he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing, that he had not lost his labour in seeking; and the joy is the greater, because he began to be out of hope of finding it. And he calls his friends and neighbours, the shepherds that kept their flocks about him, saying, Rejoice with me; perhaps among the pastoral songs which the shepherds used to sing, there was one for such an occasion as this, which these words might be the burthen of, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost, whereas they never sung, rejoice with me, for I have lost none. Observe, He calls it his sheep though a stray, a wandring sheep; he has a right to it; all souls are mine; and he will claim his own and recover his right; therefore he looks after it himself, I have found it; did not send a servant, but his own Son, the great and good Shepherd, who will find what he seeks, and will be found of those that seek him not.

Secondly, The parable of the lost piece of silver.

1. The loser is here supposed to be a woman, who will more passionately grieve for her loss, and rejoice in the finding of what she lost, than perhaps a man would do, and therefore it the better serves the purpose of the parable. She hath ten pieces of silver, and out of them loses only one. Let this keep up in us high thoughts of the divine goodness, notwithstanding the sinfulness and misery of the world of mankind, that there is nine to one, nay, in the foregoing parable there are ninety-nine to one of God's creation, that retain their integrity, in whom God is praised, and never was dishonoured. O the numberless beings, for ought we know, numberless worlds of beings, that never were lost, or stept aside from the laws and ends of their creation!

2. That which is lost is a piece of silver, *δραχμὴν*, the fourth part of a shekel. The soul is silver of intrinsic worth and value; not of base metal, as iron or lead, but of silver; the mines of which are royal mines. The Hebrew word for silver is taken from the desirableness of it. It is silver coin, for so the drachma was; it is stamped with God's image and superscription, and therefore must be rendered to him. Yet it is comparatively but of small value; it was but seven pence half-penny; intimating, that if sinful men be left to perish, God would be no loser. This silver was lost in the dirt; a soul plunged in the world, and overwhelmed with the love of it, and care about it, is like a piece of money in the dirt, any one would say, it is a thousand pities it should lie there.

3. Here is a great deal of care and pains taken in quest of it. The woman lights a candle, to look behind the door, under the table, and in every corner of the house, sweeps the house, and seeks diligently till she find it. This represents the various means and methods God makes use of to bring lost souls home to himself:



he hath *lighted the candle* of the gospel, not to shew himself the way to us, but to shew us the way to him, to discover us to ourselves; he hath *swept the house* by the convictions of the word; he *seeks diligently*, his heart is upon it, to bring lost souls to himself.

4. Here is a great deal of joy for the finding of it, *ver. 9. Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost.* Those that rejoice, desire that others should rejoice with them; that are merry, would have others merry with them; she was glad she had found the piece of money, though she should spend it in entertaining those whom she called to *make merry with her.* The pleasing surprize of finding it, put her for the present into a kind of transport, *εὐρηκα, εὐρηκα, I have found, I have found,* is the language of joy.

Thirdly, The reddition of these two parables is to the same purpose, *ver. 7. 10. There is joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,* as those publicans and sinners did, some of them at least (and if but one of them did repent, Christ would reckon it worth his while) more than over a great number of *just persons, which need no repentance.* Observe,

1. The *repentance and conversion* of sinners on earth, is *matter of joy and rejoicing in heaven.* It is possible that the greatest sinners may be brought to repentance, while there is life there is hope, and the worst are not to be despaired of; and the worst of sinners, if they repent and turn, shall find mercy. Yet that is not all, (1.) God will *delight* to shew them mercy; will reckon their conversion a return for all the expence he has been at upon them. There is always *joy in heaven*; God *rejoiceth in all his works*, but particularly in the works of his grace: he rejoiceth to do good to penitent sinners, with his *whole heart*, and his *whole soul.* He rejoiceth not only in the conversion of churches and nations, but even over *one sinner that repenteth*, though but one. (2.) The good angels will be glad that mercy is shewn them, so far are they from repining at it, though those of their nature that sinned be left to perish, and no mercy shewed to them; though those sinners that repent, that are so mean, and have been so vile, are upon their repentance to be taken into communion with them, and shortly to be made like them, and equal to them. The conversion of sinners, is the joy of angels, and they gladly become ministring spirits to them for their good, upon their conversion. The redemption of mankind was matter of joy, in the presence of the angels, for they sung, *Glory to God in the highest,* Luke ii. 14.

2. There is more joy over *one sinner that repenteth*, and turns to be religious from a course of life that had been notoriously vile and vicious, than there is over *ninety nine just persons, who need no repentance.* (1.) More joy for the redemption and salvation of fallen man, than for the preservation and confirmation of the angels that stand, and did indeed need no repentance. (2.) More joy for the conversion of the sinners of the Gentiles, and of those publicans that now heard Christ preach, than for all the praises and devotions, and all the *God I thank thee*s of the Pharisees, and other the self-justifying Jews, who thought that they *needed no repentance*, and that therefore God should abundantly rejoice in them, and *make his boast* of them; as those that were most *his honour*; but Christ tells them it was quite otherwise; that God was more praised *in*, and pleased *with* the penitent, broken heart of one of those despised, envied sinners, than all the long prayers which the scribes and Pharisees made, that could not see any thing amiss in themselves. Nay, (3.) More joy for the conversion of one such great sinner, such a Pharisee as Paul had been in his time, than for the regular conversation of one that had always carried himself decently and well, and comparatively *needs no repentance*, needs not such an universal change of the life, as those great sinners need. Not but that it is best not to go astray; but the grace of God, both the power and the pity of that grace, is most manifested in the *reducing* of great sinners, more than in the *conducting* of those that never went astray. And many times those that have been great sinners before their conversion, prove more eminently and zealously good after; of which Paul is an instance, and therefore in him God was greatly *glorified*, Gal. i. 24. They to whom much is forgiven, will love much. It is spoken after the manner of men; we are moved with a more sensible joy for the recovery of what we had lost, than for the continuance of what we had always enjoyed; for health *out of* sickness, than for health *from* sickness. It is as *life from the dead*: a constant course of religion may in itself be more valuable, and yet a sudden return from an evil course and way of sin may yield a more surprizing pleasure. Now if there is such *joy in heaven*, for the conversion of sinners, then the Pharisees were very much strangers to a heavenly spirit, who did all they could to hinder it, and were grieved at it; and who were exasperated at Christ when he was doing a piece of work, that was of all other most grateful to heaven.

11. ¶ And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his

living. 13. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country; and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15. And he went and joyned himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18. I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry. 24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. 25. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. 26. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. 29. And he answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment, and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

We have here the parable of the prodigal son; the scope of which is the same with those before, to shew how pleasing to God the conversion of sinners is, of great sinners, and how ready he is to receive and entertain such upon their repentance; but the circumstances of the parable do much more largely and fully set forth the riches of gospel-grace than those did, and it has been and will be, while the world stands, of unspeakable use to poor sinners, both to direct and to encourage them in repenting and returning to God. Now,

1. The parable represents God as a *common father* to all mankind; to the whole family of Adam; we all are his *offspring*; have all *one Father*, and *one God created us*, Mal. ii. 10. *From him we had our being, in him, we still have it, and from him we receive our maintenance:* He is *our Father*, for he has the *educating and portioning* of us, and will *put us in* his testament, or *leave us out*, according as we are or are not dutiful children to him. Our Saviour hereby intimates to those proud Pharisees, that these publicans and sinners whom they thus despised were their brethren, partakers of the same nature, and therefore they ought to be glad of any kindness shewn them, God is the God, *not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles*, Rom. iii. 29. *The same Lord over all, that is rich in mercy to all that call upon him.*

2. It represents the children of men as of *different characters*, though all related to God as their common father: He had *two sons*, one of them a solid grave youth, *reserved and austere*, sober himself, but not at all *good-humoured* to those about him; such a one would adhere to his education, and not be easily drawn from it; but the other *volatile and mercurial*, and impatient of restraint, roving, and willing to try his fortune, and if he fall into ill hands likely to be a rake, notwithstanding his virtuous education. Now this latter represents the publicans and sinners, whom



whom Christ is endeavouring to bring to repentance, and the Gentiles, whom the apostles were to be sent forth to *preach repentance* to: The former, the Jews in general, and particularly the Pharisees, whom he was endeavouring to reconcile to that grace of God, which was offered to, and bestowed upon, sinners.

The *younger son* is the prodigal, whose character and case is here designed, to represent that of a sinner, that of every one of us in our natural state, but especially of some.

Now we are to observe concerning him,

First, His *riot and ramble*, when he was a prodigal, and the extravagances and miseries he fell into. We are told,

1. What his request to his father was, *ver. 12. He said to his father, proudly and pertyly enough, Father, give me, (he might have put a little more in his mouth, and have said, Pray give me, or, Sir, if you please, give me, but he makes an imperious demand) give me the portion of goods that falleth to me; not so much as you think fit to allot me, but that which falls to me as my due.* Note, It is ill, and the beginning of worse, when men look upon God's gift as due debts. *Give me the portion, all my child's part, that falls to me; not try me with a little, and see how I can manage that, and accordingly trust me with more, but give it me all at present in possession, and I will never expect any thing in reversion, any thing hereafter.* Note, The great folly of sinners, and that which ruins them is, being content to have *their portion in hand*; now in this life-time to *receive their good things*. They look only at the things that are seen, that are temporal, and covet only a present gratification, but have no care for a future felicity, when that is spent and gone.

And why did he desire to have his portion in his own hands? Was it that he might apply himself to business, and trade with it, and so make it more? No, he had no thought of that: But (1.) He was *weary of his father's government*; sick of the good order and discipline of his father's family, and was fond of liberty, falsely so called; but indeed the greatest slavery, for so a *liberty to sin* is. See the folly of many young men that are religiously educated, but are impatient of the confinement of their education, and never think themselves their own masters, their own men, till they have broke all God's bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from them, and instead of them, bound themselves with the cords of their own lust. Here is the original of the apostasy of sinners from God, they will not be tied up to the rules of *God's government*, will themselves *be as gods*, knowing no other good and evil but what themselves please. (2.) He was willing to get from under his father's eye, for that was always a check upon him, and often gave a check to him. A *shyness of God*, and a willingness to disbelieve his omniscience, is at the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked. (3.) He was distrustful of his father's management; he would have his *portion of goods* himself, for he thought his father would be laying up for hereafter for him, and, in order to that, would limit him in his present expences, and that he did not like. (4.) He was *proud of himself*, and had a *great conceit of his own sufficiency*: He thought if he had but his portion in his own hands, he could manage it better than his father did, and make a better figure with it. There are more young people ruined by *pride*, than by any one lust whatsoever. Our first parents ruined themselves; and all theirs, by a foolish ambition, to be *independent*, and not to be beholden even to God himself; and this is at the bottom of sinners persisting in their sin, they will be *for themselves*.

2. How kind his father was to him. *He divided unto them his living*: He computed what he had to dispose of between his sons, and gave the younger son *his share*, and offered the elder his, which ought to be a *double portion*; but it should seem, he desired his father to keep it in his own hands still, and we may see what he got by it, *ver. 31. All that I have is thine.* He got all by staying for something in reserve. He gave the younger son what he asked, and the son had no reason to complain that he did him any wrong in the dividend; he had as much as he expected, and perhaps more. (1.) Thus he might now see his father's kindness, how willing he was to please him, and make him easy, and that he was not such an unkind father as he was willing to represent him, when he wanted an excuse to be gone. (2.) Thus he would in a little time be made to see *his own folly*, and that he was not such a wise manager for himself, as he would be thought to be. Note, God is a kind father to all his children, and gives to them *all life and breath, and all things*, even to the evil and unthankful, *διδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἔτι βίον, He divided to them life*; God's giving us life, is putting us in a capacity to serve and glorify him.

How he managed himself when he had got his portion in his own hands; he set himself to spend it as fast as he could, and as prodigals use to do, in a little time he made himself a beggar, *not many days after, ver. 13.* Note, If God leaves us never so little to ourselves, it will not be long ere we depart from him. As soon as ever the bridle of restraining grace is taken off, we are soon gone. That which the younger son determined, was to be gone presently, and in order to that, he *gathered all together*. Sinners, that go astray from God, *venture their all*.

Now the condition of the prodigal, in this ramble of his, represents to us a *sinful state*, that *miserable state*, into which man is fallen,

1. A sinful state is a state of *departure*, and *distance* from God: (1.) It is the *sinfulness* of sin, that it is an apostasy from God. He *took his journey* from his father's house; sinners are fled from God, they *go a whoring from him*; they revolt from their allegiance to him, as a servant that outruns his service, or a wife that treacherously departs from her husband, and they say unto God, *depart*. They get as far off him as they can: This world is the *far country*, in which they take up their residence, and are as at home, and in the service and enjoyment of it they spend their all. (2.) It is the misery of sinners that they are afar off from God, from him who is the fountain of all good, and are going further and further from him. What is hell itself, but being *afar off* from God?

2. A sinful state is a *spending state*. There he *wasted his substance with riotous living, ver. 13.* devoured it *with harlots, ver. 30.* and in a little time *he had spent all, ver. 14.* He bought fine clothes; spent a deal in meat and drink, treated high, conversed with those that helped him to make an end of what he had in a little time. As to this world, they that *live riotously, waste* what they have, and will have a great deal to answer for, that they spend that upon their lusts, which should be for the necessary subsistence of themselves and their families; but this is to be applied spiritually; wilful sinners *waste* their patrimony, for they misemploy their thoughts, and all the powers of their souls, mispend their time and all their opportunities; do not only bury, but embezzle, the talents they were entrusted to trade with for their Master's honour. And the gifts of providence, which were intended to enable them to serve God, and to do good with, are made the food and fuel of their lusts. The soul that is made a drudge, either to the world, or to the flesh, *wastes its substance*, and *lives riotously*. *One sinner destroys much good, Eccl. ix. 18.* The good he destroys is valuable, and it is none of his own, they are his *Lord's goods* that he *wastes*, which must be accounted for.

3. A sinful state is a *wanting state*. *When he had spent all upon his harlots, they left him, to seek such another prey, and there arose a mighty famine in that land, every thing was scarce and dear, and he began to be in want, ver. 14.* Note, Wilful waste brings woful want. Riotous living in time, perhaps in a little time, brings men to a  *morsel of bread*; especially when *ill times* hasten on the consequences of *ill husbandry*, which good husbandry would have *provided for*. This represents the misery of sinners, who have thrown away *their own mercies*, the favour of God, their interest in Christ, the strivings of the Spirit, the admonitions of conscience, these they *game away* for the pleasure of sense, and the wealth of the world, and then are ready to perish for want of them. Sinners want necessities for their souls, they have neither food nor raiment for them, nor any provision for hereafter. A sinful state is like a land where *famine reigns*, a *mighty famine*; for the *heaven is as brass*, the dews of God's favour and blessing are withheld, and we must need want good things, if God deny them us: And the *earth is as iron*; the sinner's heart, that should bring forth good things, is dry and barren, and has no good in it, those sinners are *wretchedly and miserably poor*, and what aggravates it, they brought themselves into that condition, and keep themselves in it, by refusing the supplies offered.

4. A sinful state is a *vile, servile state*. When this young man's riot had brought him to want, his want brought him to servitude, *ver. 15. He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country.* The same wicked life that before was represented by *riotous living*, is here represented by *servile living*; for sinners are perfect slaves. The devil is the *citizen of that country*, for he is both in city and country; sinners *join themselves* to him, hire themselves into his service, to do *his work*, to be at *his beck*, and to depend upon him for maintenance and a portion. They that commit sin, are the *servants of sin*, John viii. 34. How did this young gentleman debase and disparage himself, when he hired himself into such a service, and under such a master as this. He *sent him into the fields*, not to feed sheep (there had been some credit in that employment, Jacob, and Moses, and David kept sheep) but to *feed swine*: The business of the devil's servants is, to *make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*, and that is no better than feeding greedy, dirty, noisy swine, and how can rational, immortal souls more disgrace themselves?

5. A sinful state is a state of *perpetual dissatisfaction*. When the prodigal began to be in want, he thought to help himself by *going to service*; and he must be content with the provision, which not the house, but the field afforded, but it is poor provision, *ver. 16. He would fain have filled his belly, satisfied his hunger, and nourished his body, with the husks that the swine did eat.* A fine pass my young master had brought himself to, to be fellow-commoner with the swine. Note, That which sinners, when they *depart from God*, promise themselves *satisfaction in*, will certainly disappoint them; they are *labouring for that which satisfies not*, Isa. lv. 2. That which is the *stumbling-block of their iniquity*, will never *satisfy their souls, nor fill their bowels*, Ezek. vii. 19. Husks are food for swine, but not for men: The wealth of the world, and the entertainments of sense, will serve for bodies, but what are those to *precious souls*? They neither suit their nature, nor satisfy their desires, nor supply their needs. He that

takes



takes up with them, *feeds on wind*, Hof. xii. 1. *feeds on ashes*, Isa. xlv. 20.

6. A sinful state is a state which *cannot expect relief from any creature*. This prodigal, when he could not earn his bread by *working*, took to *begging*, but *no man gave unto him*, because they knew he had brought all this misery upon himself, and because he was rakish and provoking to every body, such poor are *least pitied*: This, in the application of the parable, intimated, that those who depart from God, cannot be helped by any creature. In vain do we cry to the world and the flesh, those gods we have served, they have that which will *poison* a soul, but have nothing to give it which will *feed* and *nourish* it. If thou refuse God's help, whence shall any creature help thee?

7. A sinful state is a *state of death*, ver. 24. 32. *This my son was dead*. A sinner is not only dead in law, as he is under a sentence of death, but dead in state too, dead in trespasses and sins; destitute of spiritual life; no union with Christ; no spiritual senses exercised; no living to God, and therefore *dead*. The prodigal in the *far country* was *dead* to his father and his family, cut off from them, as a member from the body, or a branch from the tree, and therefore *dead*, and it is his own doing.

8. A sinful state is a *lost state*. *This my son was lost*, lost to every thing that was good; lost to all virtue and honour; lost to his father's house, they had no joy of him. Souls that are separated from God, are *lost* souls; lost as a *traveller* that is out of his way, and, if infinite mercy prevent not, will soon be *lost*, as a ship that is sunk at sea, lost irrecoverably.

9. A sinful state is a state of *madness* and *frenzy*. This is intimated in that expression, ver. 17. *when he came to himself*, which intimates that he had been *beside himself*, sure he was so when he left his father's house, and much more so, when he joined himself to the citizen of that country. *Madness* is said to be *in the heart* of sinners, Eccl. ix. 3. Satan has got possession of the soul, and how raging mad was he that was possessed by legion. Sinners, like those that are *mad*, destroy themselves with *foolish lusts*, and yet, at the same time, deceive themselves with *foolish hopes*; and they are, of all diseased persons, most enemies to their own cure.

Secondly, We have here his *return* from this *ramble*, his penitent *return* to his father again. When he was brought to the last extremity, then he bethought himself how much it was his interest to go home. Note, We must not despair of the worst, for while there is life, there is hope. The grace of God can soften the hardest heart, and give a happy turn to the strongest stream of corruption. Now observe here,

1. What was the *occasion* of his return and repentance, it was his *affliction*, when he was in *want*, then he *came to himself*. Note, Afflictions when they are sanctified by divine grace, prove happy means of turning sinners from the error of their ways. By them the ear is opened to discipline, and the heart disposed to receive instruction; and they are sensible proofs, both of the vanity of the world, and of the mischievousness of sin. Apply it spiritually; when we find the insufficiency of creatures to make us happy, and having tried all other ways of relief for our poor souls in vain, then it is time to think of returning to God. When we see what miserable comforters, what physicians of no value, all but Christ are, for a soul that groans under the guilt and power of sin, and *no man gives unto us what we need*, then sure we will apply ourselves to Jesus Christ.

2. What was the *preparative* in it, and that was *consideration*: He said within himself, he reasoned within himself, when he recovered his right mind, *How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough!* Note, Consideration is the first step towards conversion, Ezek. xviii. 28. *He considers and turns*. To consider, is to retire into ourselves, to reflect upon ourselves, and to compare one thing with another, and determine accordingly.

Now observe what it was that he considered,

(1.) He considered how bad his condition was; *I perish with hunger*: Not only I am hungry, but *I perish with hunger*, for I see not what way to expect relief. Note, Sinners will not come to the service of Christ, till they are brought to see themselves just ready to perish in the service of sin, and the consideration of that should drive us to Christ. *Master, save us, we perish*. And though we be thus driven to Christ, he will not therefore reject us, nor think himself dishonoured by our being forced to him, but rather honoured by his being applied to in a desperate case.

(2.) He considered how much better it might be made, if he would but return. *How many hired servants of my father's, the meanest in his family, the very day-labourers, have bread enough, and to spare*; such a good house doth he keep. Note, In our *father's house* there is bread for all his family; this was taught by the twelve loaves of *shew-bread*, that were constantly upon the holy table in the sanctuary, a loaf for every tribe. 2. There is *enough*, and *to spare*, enough for all, enough for each, enough to spare for such as will join themselves to his domesticks, enough and *to spare* for *charity*: *Yet there is room*; there are *crumbs* that fall from his table, which many would be glad of, and thankful for. 3. Even the *hired servants* in God's family are well provided for; the meanest that will but hire themselves into his family, to do his work, and *depend* upon his rewards, shall be well provided for.

4. The consideration of this should encourage sinners, that have

gone astray from God, to think of returning to him. Thus that adulteress reasons with herself, when she is disappointed in her new lovers, *I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now*, Hof. ii. 7.

3. What was the purpose of it. Since it is so, that his condition is so bad, and may be bettered by returning to his father, his consideration issues at length in this conclusion, *I will arise, and go to my father*. Note, Good purposes are good things, but still good performances are all in all.

1. He determined what to do. *I will arise, and go to my father*. He will not take any longer time to consider of it; but will *forthwith* arise and go. Though he be in a *far country*, a great way off from his father's house, yet, as far as it is, he will return; every step of backsliding from God, must be a step back again in return to him. Though he be *joined to a citizen of this country*, he makes no difficulty of breaking his bargain with him: *We are not debtors to the flesh*, we are under no obligation at all to our Egyptian task-masters, to give them warning, but are at liberty to quit the service when we will. Observe with what resolution he speaks, *I will arise, and go to my father*, I am resolved I will, whatever the issue be, rather than *stay here and starve*.

2. He determined what to say. True repentance is a *rising*, and *coming to God*; *Behold, we come unto thee*. But what words shall we take with us? He here considers what to say. Note, In all our addresses to God, it is good to deliberate with ourselves beforehand what we shall say, that we may *order our cause before him*, and *fill our mouth with arguments*. We have *liberty of speech*, and we ought to consider seriously with ourselves, how we may use that liberty to the utmost, and yet not abuse it.

Let us observe what he purposed to say,

1. He would confess his fault and folly; *I have sinned*. Note, Forasmuch as we have all sinned, it behoves us, and well becomes us, to own that we have sinned. The confession of sin is required and insisted upon, as a necessary condition of peace and pardon. If we plead *not guilty*, we put ourselves upon a trial by the covenant of innocency, which will certainly condemn us: If we plead *guilty*, with a contrite, penitent, and obedient heart, we refer ourselves to the covenant of grace, which offers forgiveness to those that *confess their sins*.

2. He would aggravate it, and would be so far from extenuating the matter, that he would *lay a load* upon himself for it, *I have sinned against heaven, and before thee*. Let those that are *undutiful* to their *earthly parents* think of this, they *sin against heaven, and before God*. Offences against them, are offences against God. Let us all think of this, as that which renders our *sin exceeding sinful*, and should render us exceeding sorrowful for it. (1.) That sin is committed in contempt of God's authority over us. We have *sinned against heaven*. God is here called *heaven*, to signify how highly he is exalted above us, and the dominion he has over us, for the *heavens do rule*. The malignity of sin aims high, it is *against heaven*. The daring sinner is said to have *set his mouth against the heavens*, Psal. lxxiii. 9. Yet it is *impotent* malice, for we cannot hurt the heavens: Nay, it is *foolish* malice, what is *shot against the heavens*, will return upon the head of him that shoots it, Psal. vii. 16. Sin is an affront to the *God of heaven*, it is a forfeiture of the glories and joys of heaven, and a contradiction to the designs of the kingdom of heaven. (2.) It is committed in contempt of God's eye upon us. *I have sinned against heaven, and yet before thee*, and under thine eye, than which there could not be a greater affront put upon him.

3. He would judge and condemn himself for it, and acknowledge himself to have forfeited all the privileges of the family; *I am no more worthy to be called thy son*, ver. 29. He doth not deny the relation, for that was all he had to trust to, but he owns his father might justly deny the relation, and shut his doors against him. He had, at his own demand, the portion of goods that belonged to him, and had reason to expect no more. Note, It becomes sinners to acknowledge themselves unworthy to receive any favour from God, and to humble and abase themselves before him.

4. He would nevertheless sue for admission into the family, though it were into the meanest post there. *Make me as one of thy hired servants*; that is good enough, and too good, for me. Note, True penitents have a high value for God's house, and the privileges of it, and will be glad of any place, so they may but be in it, though it be but as *door-keepers*, Psal. lxxxiv. 10. If it be imposed on him as a mortification, to sit with the servants, he will not only submit to it, but count it a preferment in comparison with his present state. Those that return to God from whom they have revolted, cannot but be desirous some way or other to be employed for him, and put into a capacity of serving and honouring him. *Make me as a hired servant*, that I may shew I love my father's house as much as ever I slighted it.

5. In all this he would have an eye to his father as a father. *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father*. Note, Eying God as a Father, and our Father, will be of great use in our repentance and return to him. It will make our sorrow for sin genuine, our resolutions against it strong, and encourage us to hope for pardon. God delights both by penitents



penitents and petitioners to be called *Father*; *Is not Ephraim a dear son?*

4. What was the performance of this purpose. *He arose, and came to his father.* His good resolve he put in execution without delay; he struck while the iron was hot, and did not adjourn the thought to some more convenient season. Note, It is our interest speedily to close with our convictions. Have we said we will arise and go! let us immediately arise and come. He did not come half way, and then pretend he was tired and could get no further, but weak and weary as he was he made a through business of it. *If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto me, and do thy first works.*

Thirdly, We have here his reception and entertainment with his father. *He came to his father*; but was he welcome? Yes, heartily welcome. And, by the way, it is an example to parents whose children have been foolish and disobedient, if they repent and submit themselves, not to be harsh and severe with them, but to be governed in such a case, by the wisdom that is from above, which is *gentle and easy to be intreated*; herein let them be followers of God, and merciful as he is: But it is chiefly designed to set forth the grace and mercy of God to poor sinners, that repent, and return to him, and his readiness to forgive them. Now here observe,

1. The great love and affection wherewith the father received the son, *ver. 20.* *When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.* He expressed his kindness, before the son expressed his repentance; for God prevents us with the blessings of his goodness, even before we call, he answers; for he knows what is in our hearts. *I said I will confess, and thou forgavest.* How lively are the images of this here! (1.) Here were *eyes of mercy*, and those eyes quick-sighted; *when he was yet a great way off his father saw him*, before any other of the family were aware of him, as if from the top of some high tower, he had been looking that way that his son was gone, with such a thought as this, O that I could see yonder wretched son of mine, coming home! This intimates God's desire of the conversion of sinners, and his readiness to meet them that are coming towards him. *He looketh on men* when they are gone astray from him, to see whether they will return to him, and he is aware of the first inclination towards him. (2.) Here were *bowels of mercy*, and those bowels turning within him, and yearning at the sight of his son, he had *compassion*. Misery is the object of pity, even the misery of a sinner, though he has brought it upon himself, yet God compassionates. *His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*, Hof. xi. 8. Judg. x. 16. (3.) Here were *feet of mercy*, and those feet quick-paced, *he ran*, this notes how swift God is to shew mercy. The prodigal son came slowly, under a burthen of shame and fear, but the tender father ran to meet him with his encouragements. (4.) Here were *arms of mercy*, and those arms stretched out to embrace him; *he fell on his neck*; though guilty, and deserving to be beaten, though dirty, and newly come from feeding swine, that any one that had not the strongest and tenderest compassions of a father, would have lothed to touch him; yet he thus takes him in his arms, and lays him in his bosom. Thus dear are true penitents to God, thus welcome to the Lord Jesus. (5.) Here are *lips of mercy*, and those lips dropping as a honey-comb, *he kissed him*; this kiss not only assured him of his welcome, but sealed his pardon; his former follies shall be all forgiven, and not mentioned against him, nor is one word said by way of upbraiding. This was like David's kissing Absalom, 2 Sam. xiv. 33. And all this speaks how ready, and free, and forward the Lord Jesus is, to receive and entertain poor returning, repenting sinners, according to his Father's will.

2. The penitent submission which the poor prodigal made to his father, *ver. 21.* *He said unto him, Father, I have sinned.* As it commends the good father's kindness, that he shewed it before the prodigal expressed his repentance; so it commends the prodigal's repentance, that he expressed it after his father had shewed him so much kindness. When he had received the kiss which sealed his pardon, yet he said, *Father, I have sinned.* Note, Even those that have received the pardon of their sins, and the comfortable sense of their pardon, yet must have in their hearts, a sincere contrition for it, and with their mouths must make a penitent confession of it, even of those sins which they have reason to hope are pardoned. David penned *Psal. li.* after Nathan had said, *The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die.* Nay, the comfortable sense of the pardon of sin, should increase our sorrow for it; and that is ingenuous evangelical sorrow, which is increased by such a consideration. See *Ezek. xvi. 6.* *Thou shalt be ashamed and confounded, when I am pacified towards thee.* The more we see of God's readiness to forgive us, the more difficult it should be to us to forgive ourselves.

3. The splendid provision which this kind father made for the returning prodigal. He was going on in his submission, but one word we find in his purpose what to say, *ver. 19.* which we do not find he did say, *ver. 21.* and that was, *make me as one of the hired servants.* We cannot think he forgot it, much less that he changed his mind, and was now either less desirous to be in the family, or less willing to be a hired servant there, than when he made that purpose; but his father interrupted him, prevented his saying it; hold, son, talk no more of thine unwor-

thiness, thou art heartily welcome, and though not *worthy to be called a son*, shalt be treated as a *dear son*, as a *pleasant child*. He who is thus entertained at first, needs not ask to be made as a *hired servant*. Thus when *Ephraim bemoaned himself*, God comforted him, *Jer. xxxi. 18, 20.* It is strange that here is not one word of rebuke, why did you not stay with your harlots and your swine? You could never find the way home, till beaten hither with your own rod. No, here is nothing like this; which intimates, that when God forgives the sins of true penitents, he forgets them, he remembers them no more, they *shall not be mentioned against them*, *Ezek. xviii. 22.*

But this is not all; here is rich and royal provision made for him, according to his birth and quality, far beyond what he did or could expect. He would have thought it sufficient, and been very thankful, if his father had but taken notice of him, and bid him go to the kitchen and get his dinner with the servants; but God doth for those who return to their duty, and cast themselves upon his mercy, abundantly above what they are able to ask or think. The prodigal came home between hope and fear, fear of being rejected, and hope of being received; but his father was not only better to him than his fears, but better to him than his hopes, not only *received him*, but received him with respect.

1. He came home *in rags*, and his father not only clothed him but adorned him. He said to the servants, who all attended their master, upon notice that his son was come, *Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.* The worst old clothes in the house might have served, and had been good enough for him; but the father calls not for a coat, but for a robe, the garment of princes and great men, the *best robe*, τὴν Στόλην τὴν πρῶτην, there is a double emphasis, *that robe, that principal robe*, you know which I mean; the *first robe*, so it may be read, the robe he wore before he ran his ramble. When backsliders repent and do their *first works*, they shall be received, and dressed in their *first robes*. Bring hither that robe, and put it on him, he will be ashamed to wear it, and think it ill becomes him, who comes home in such a dirty pickle, but *put it on him* and do not offer it him only. And *put a ring on his hand*, a signet-ring, with the arms of the family, in token of his being owned as a branch of the family; rich people wore rings, and his father hereby signified, that though he had spent one portion, yet upon his repentance he intended him another. He came home barefoot, his feet perhaps sore with travel, and therefore put *shoes on his feet*, to make him easy. Thus doth the grace of God provide for true penitents, (1.) The *righteousness of Christ* is the robe, that *principal robe* with which they are clothed; they *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, are clothed with that *sun*. The robe of righteousness is the garment of salvation, *Isa. lxi. 10.* A new nature is this *best robe*, true penitents are clothed with that, being sanctified throughout. (2.) The earnest of the Spirit, by whom we are sealed to the day of redemption, is the *ring on the hand*. After that ye believed, ye were sealed. They that are sanctified are adorned and dignified, are put in power, as Joseph was by Pharaoh's giving him a ring. *Put a ring on his hand*, to be before him a constant memorial of his father's kindness, that he may never forget it. (3.) The preparation of the gospel of peace, is *shoes for our feet*, *Eph. vi. 13.* so that compared with this here, signifies (saith Grotius) that God when he receives true penitents into his favour, makes use of them for the convincing and converting of others, by their instructions, at least by their examples. David when pardoned will teach transgressors God's ways, and Peter when he is converted will strengthen his brethren. Or it intimates, that they shall go on cheerfully and with resolution in the way of religion, as a man doth when he hath shoes on his feet, over as he doth when he is barefoot.

2. He came home *hungry*, and his father not only fed him, but *feasted him*, *ver. 23.* *Bring hither the fatted calf*, that has been stall fed, and long reserved for some special occasion, and *kill it*, that my son may have his belly full of the best we have. Cold meat might have served, or the leavings of the last meal, but he shall have fresh meat and hot meat, and the fatted calf can never be better bestowed. Note, There is excellent food provided by our heavenly Father, for all those that arise and come to him. Christ himself is the bread of life; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; in him there is a feast for souls, a feast of fat things. It was a great change with the prodigal, who but a while ago would fain have filled his belly with husks. How sweet will the supplies of the new covenant be, and the relishes of its comforts, to those who have been labouring in vain for satisfaction in the creature? Now he found his own words made good, *In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare.*

4. The great joy and rejoicing that there was for his return. The bringing of the fatted calf was designed to be not only a feast for him, but a festival for the family; *let us all eat and be merry*, for it is a good day; for *this my son was dead*, when he was in his ramble, but his return is as *life from the dead*, he is alive again; we thought he was dead, having heard nothing from him of a long time, but behold he lives; he was lost, we gave him up for lost, we despaired of hearing of him, but he is found. Note, 1. The conversion of a soul from sin to God, is



the raising of that soul from death to life, and the finding of that which seemed to be lost. It is a great, and wonderful, and happy change. What was in itself *dead*, is made *alive*, what was *lost* to God and his church, is *found*, and what was *unprofitable*, becomes *profitable*, Philem. 11. it is such a change as that upon the face of the earth, when the spring returns. 2. The conversion of sinners is greatly pleasing to the God of heaven, and all that belong to his family ought to rejoice in it; those in heaven do, and those on earth should. Observe, it was *the father* that began the joy, and set all the rest on rejoicing; therefore we should be glad of the repentance of sinners, because it accomplishes God's designs, it is the bringing of those to Christ, whom the Father had given him, and in whom he will be for ever glorified. *We joy for your sakes before our God*, with an eye to him, 1 Thes. iii. 9. and *ye are our rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who is the master of the family, 1 Thes. ii. 19.

The family complied with the master, *they began to be merry*. Note, God's children and servants ought to be affected with things as he is.

Fourthly, We have here the *repining and envying of the elder brother*, which is described by way of reproof to the scribes and Pharisees, to shew them the folly and wickedness of their discontent at the repentance and conversion of the publicans and sinners, and the favour Christ shewed them; and he represents it so as not to aggravate the matter, but as allowing them still the privileges of elder brethren; the Jews had so, though the Gentiles were favoured, for the preaching of the gospel must begin at Jerusalem. Christ, when he reproves them for their fault, yet spoke them fair, to smooth them into a good temper towards the poor publicans. But by the *elder brother* here, we may understand those that are really good, and have been so from their youth up, and never went astray into any vicious course of living; who *comparatively* need no repentance: and to such these words in the close, *Son, thou art ever with me*, are applicable without any difficulty, but not to the scribes and Pharisees.

Now concerning the elder brother, observe,

1. How *foolish and fretful* he was, upon occasion of his brother's reception, and how he was disgusted at it. It seems he was abroad *in the field*, in the country, when his brother came, and by that time he was returned home, the *mirth* was begun; when *he drew nigh to the house*, he heard *musick and dancing*, either while the dinner was in getting ready, or rather after they had eaten and were full; ver. 25. He enquired *what those things meant*, ver. 26. and was informed, that his brother was come, and his father had made him a feast for his *welcome home*, and great joy there was, *because he had received him safe and sound*, ver. 27. It is but one word in the original, he had *received him* *ὡς αἰνέοντα*, in *health*, well both in body and mind. He received him not only well in body, but a penitent, returned to his *right mind*, and well reconciled to his father's house, cured of his vices, and his rakish disposition, else he had not been received *safe and sound*. Now this disoblged him to the highest degree; *he was angry and would not go in*, ver. 28. not only because he was resolved he would not himself join in the mirth, but because he would shew his displeasure at it, and would intimate to his father, that he should have kept out his younger brother. This shews what is a common fault, (1.) In mens families, that those who have always been a comfort to their parents, think they should have the monopoly of their parents favours, and are apt to be *too sharp* upon those who have transgressed, and to grudge their parents kindness to them. (2.) In God's family, those that are comparatively *innocents*, seldom know how to be compassionate towards those that are manifestly *penitents*. The language of such we have here in what the *elder brother* said, ver. 29, 30. and it is written for warning to those that by the grace of God are kept from scandalous sin, and kept in the way of virtue and sobriety, that they sin not after the similitude of this transgression. Let us observe the particulars of it.

1. He *boasted of himself*, and of his *own virtue and obedience*. He had not only not out-ran his father's house, as his brother did, but had made himself as a *servant* in it, and had done so long. *Lo these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment*. Note, It is too common for those that are better than their neighbours, to brag of it, yea, and to make their boasts of it before God himself, as if he were indebted to them for it. I am apt to think this elder brother said more than was true, when he gloried that he had *never transgressed his father's commands*, for then I believe he would not have been so obstinate, as now he was, to his *father's intreaties*. However we will admit it comparatively, he had not been so disobedient as his brother had been. O what need have good men to take heed of pride, a corruption that ariseth out of the ashes of other corruptions! Those that have long served God, and been kept from gross sin, have a great deal to be humbly thankful for, but nothing proudly to boast of.

2. He *complained of his father*, as if he had not been so kind to him as he ought to have been, who had been so dutiful; *thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends*. He was out of humour now, else he would not have made this

complaint; for no question if he had asked such a thing at any time, he might have had it at first word; and we have reason to think he did not desire it; but the *killing of the fatted calf* put him upon making this peevish reflexion. When men are *in passion* they are apt to reflect so as they would not, if they were in their right mind. He had been fed at his father's table, and had many a time been merry with him and the family, but his father had never given him so much as a kid, which was but a small token of love compared with the *fatted calf*. Note, Those that think *highly* of themselves and their services, are apt to think *hardly* of their master, and meanly of his favours. We ought to own ourselves utterly unworthy of those mercies which God hath thought fit to give us, much more of those that he hath not thought fit to give us, and therefore we must not *complain*. He would have had a kid to *make merry with his friends* abroad, whereas the *fatted calf* he grudged so much, was given to his brother, not to *make merry with his friends* abroad, but *with the family* at home: the mirth of God's children should be with their father and his family, in communion with God and his saints, and not with any *other friends*.

3. He was very *ill-humoured* towards his younger brother, and harsh in what he thought and said concerning him. Some good people are apt to be overtaken in this fault, nay, and to indulge themselves too much in it; to look with disdain upon those who have not preserved their reputation so clean as they have done, and to be sour and morose towards them, yea, though they have given very good evidences of their repentance and reformation; this is not the Spirit of Christ, but of the Pharisees. Let us observe the instances of it.

1. He *would not go in*, except his brother be *turned out*; one house shall not hold him and his own brother, no not his *father's house*. The language of this, was that of the Pharisee, Isa. lxxv. 5. *Stand by thy self, come not near me, for I am holier than thou*; and Luke xviii. 11. *I am not as other men are, nor even as this publican*. Note, Though we are to shun the society of those sinners whom we are in danger of being infected by, yet we must not be shy of the company of penitent sinners, whom we may get good by. He saw his father had *taken him in*, and yet he would not *go in* to him. Note, We think too well of ourselves, if we cannot find in our hearts to *receive* those God hath *received*, and to admit those into favour and friendship, and fellowship with us, whom we have reason to think God has a favour for, and are taken into friendship and fellowship with him.

2. He would not call him *brother*; but this *thy son*, which sounds arrogantly, and not without reflexion upon his father, as if his indulgence had made him a prodigal; he is *thy son*, thy darling. Note, Forgetting the relation we stand in to our brethren, as brethren, and disowning that, is at the bottom of all our neglects of our duty to them, and our contradictions to that duty. Let us give our relations, both in the flesh and in the Lord, the titles that belong to them. Let the rich call the poor *brethren*, and let the innocents call the penitents so.

3. He *aggravated his brother's faults*, and made the worst of them, endeavouring to incense his father against him; he is *thy son, who hath devoured thy living with harlots*. It is true, he had spent his own portion foolishly enough, whether upon harlots or no, we are not told before, perhaps that was only the language of the elder brother's jealousy and ill will; but that he had devoured *all his father's living* was false, the father had still a good estate; now this shows how apt we are in censuring our brethren to *make the worst* of every thing, and to set it out in the blackest colours, which is not doing as we would be done by, nor as our heavenly Father doth by us, who is not extreme to mark iniquities.

4. He *grudged him the kindness* that his father shewed him. *Thou hast killed for him the fatted calf*, as if he were such a son as should be. Note, It is an ill thing to *envy* penitents the grace of God, and to have our eye evil, because his is good. As we must not envy those that are the worst of sinners, the gifts of common providence, *Let not thine heart envy sinners*; so we must not envy those that have been the worst of sinners, the gifts of covenant love upon their repentance; we must not envy them their pardon and peace, and comfort; no, nor any extraordinary gift God bestows upon them, which makes them eminently acceptable or useful. Paul before his conversion had been a prodigal, had *devoured his heavenly Father's living*, by the *havock* he made of the *church*, yet when after his conversion he had greater measures of grace given him, and more honour put upon him than the other apostles, they who were the elder brethren, that had been *serving Christ*, when he was persecuting him, and had not transgressed at any time his commandments, did not envy him his visions and revelations, nor his more extensive usefulness, but *glorified God in him*, which ought to be an example to us, as the reverse of this elder brother.

2. Let us now see how *favourable and friendly* his father was in his *carriage towards him*, when he was thus sour and ill-humoured, and this is as surprizing as the former. Methinks the mercy and grace of our God in Christ, shines almost as bright in his tender and gentle bearing with *peevish saints*, represented by the elder brother here, as before in his reception of prodigal sinners upon their repentance, represented before by the younger brother. The



The disciples of Christ themselves had many infirmities, and were men subject to like passions as others, yet Christ bare with them, as a nurse with her children, see 1 *Thes.* ii. 7.

1. When he would not come in, his father came out and intreated him, spoke him fair, gave him good words, and desired him to come in. He might justly have said, If he will not come in, let him stay out, shut the doors against him, and send him to seek a lodging where he can find it: Is not the house my own, and may I not do what I please in it? the fatted calf my own, and may I not do what I please with it? No, as he went to meet the younger son, so now he goes to court the elder, did not send a servant out with a kind message to him, but went himself. Now, (1.) This is designed to represent to us the goodness of God; how strangely gentle and winning he has been towards those that were strangely froward and provoking. He reasoned with Cain, *Why art thou wroth?* He bare Israel's manners in the wilderness, *Acts* xv. 18. How mildly did God reason with Elijah, when he was upon the fret? 1 *Kings* xix. 4, 5, 6. and especially with Jonah, whose case was very parallel with this here, for he was there disquieted at the repentance of Nineveh, and the mercy shewed it, as the elder brother here, and those questions, *Dost thou well to be angry? And should not I spare Nineveh?* are not unlike these expostulations of the father with the elder brother here. (2.) It is to teach all superiors to be mild and gentle with their inferiors, even when they are in a fault, and passionately justify themselves in it, than which nothing can be more provoking, and yet even in that case let fathers not provoke their children to more wrath, and masters forbear threatening, and both shew all meekness.

2. His father assured him that the kind entertainment he gave his younger brother, neither was any reflexion upon him, nor should be any prejudice to him, *ver.* 31. Thou shalt fare never the worse for it, nor have ever the less for it: *Son, thou art ever with me*, the reception of him is no rejection of thee, nor what is laid out on him, any sensible diminution of what I design for thee, thou shalt still remain entitled to the *pars entia*, so our law calls it, the *double portion*, so the Jewish law called it, thou shalt be *heres ex affe*, so the Roman law called it, *All that I have is thine*, by an indefeasible title. If he had not given him a *kid to make merry with his friends*, he had eaten bread at his table continually: And it is better be happy with our Father in heaven, than merry with any friend we have in this world. Note, (1.) It is the unspeakable happiness of all the children of God, who keep close to their Father's house, that they are and shall be ever with him; they are so in this world by faith, they shall be so in the other world by fruition, and all that he has is theirs; for if children, then heirs, *Rom.* viii. 17. (2.) Therefore we ought not to envy others God's grace to them, because we shall have never the less for their sharing in it. If we be true believers, all that God is, and all that he has, is ours; and if others come to be true believers, all that he is, and all that he has, is theirs too, and yet we have not the less; as they that walk in the light and warmth of the sun, have all the benefit they can have by it, and yet not the less for others having as much: For Christ in his church, is like as they say of the soul in the body, it is *tota in toto*, and yet *tota in qualibet parte*.

3. His father gave him a good reason for this uncommon joy in the family, *ver.* 32. *It was meet that we should make merry and be glad*. He might have insisted upon his own authority; it was my will that the family should make merry and be glad, *Stat pro ratione voluntas*. But it doth not become even those that have authority, to be vouching and appealing to it upon every occasion, that doth but make it cheap and common; it is better give a convincing reason, as the father doth here; it was meet and very becoming that we should make merry, for the return of a prodigal son, more than for the perseverance of a dutiful son; for though the latter be a greater blessing to a family, yet the former is a more sensible pleasure. Any family would be much more transported with joy at the raising of a dead child to life, yea, or at the recovery of a child from a sickness that was adjudged mortal, than for the continued life and health of many children. Note, God will be justified when he speaks, and all flesh shall sooner or later be silent before him. We do not find any reply that the elder brother made to what his father said, which intimates that he was entirely satisfied, and acquiesced in his father's will, and was well reconciled to his prodigal brother; and his father put him in mind that he was his brother; *his thy brother*. Note, A good man, though he have not such command of himself at all times as to keep his temper, yet will, with the grace of God, recover his temper, though he fall, yet will be not be utterly cast down. But as for the scribes and Pharisees, for whose conviction it was primarily intended, for ought appears they continued the same disaffection to the sinners the Gentiles, and to the gospel of Christ, because it was preached to them.

## C H A P. XVI.

The scope of Christ's discourse in this chapter is, to awaken and quicken us all, so to use this world as not to abuse it; so to manage all our possessions and enjoyments here, as that they may make for us, and may not make against us in the other world; for they will do either the one or the other, according as we use them now. (1.) If we do good with them, and lay out what we have in works of piety and charity, we shall reap the benefit of it in the world to come; and this he shews in the parable of the unjust steward, who made so good a hand of his lord's goods, as that when he was turned out of his stewardship, he had a comfortable subsistence to betake himself to: The parable itself we have, *ver.* 1—8. The reddition and application of it, *ver.* 9—13. And the contempt which the Pharisees put upon the doctrine Christ preached to them, for which he sharply reproveth them, adding some other weighty sayings, *ver.* 14—18. (2.) If instead of doing good with our worldly enjoyments, we make them the food and fuel of our lusts, of our luxury and sensuality, and deny relief to the poor, we shall certainly perish eternally, and the things of this world which were thus abused, will but add to our misery and torment: This he shews in the other parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which has likewise a further reach, and that is to awaken us all to take the warning given us by the written word, and not to expect immediate messages from the other world, *ver.* 19—31.

1. **A**ND he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. 2. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship: for thou mayest be no longer steward. 3. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed. 4. I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. 5. So he called every one of his lords debtors, unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? 6. And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. 8. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. 9. And I say unto you, Make to your selves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. 10. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. 11. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12. And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? 13. ¶ No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. 14. And the Pharisees also who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. 15. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify your selves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God. 16. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. 17. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. 18. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery.

We mistake if we imagine that the design of Christ's doctrine and holy religion was either to amuse us with notions of divine mysteries,



mysteries, or to entertain us with notions of divine mercies : No, the divine revelation of both those in the gospel is intended to engage and quicken us to the practice of Christian duties, and as much as any one thing to the duty of beneficence, and doing good to those who stand in need of any thing that either we have, or can do for them. This our Saviour is here pressing us to, by minding us that we are but *stewards of the manifold grace of God*; and since we have, in divers instances, been unfaithful, and have forfeited the favour of our Lord, it is our wisdom to think how we may, some other way, make what we have in the world turn to a good account. Parables must not be forced beyond their primary intention, and therefore we must not hence infer, that any one can befriend us if we lie under the displeasure of our Lord; but that in the general we must so lay out what we have in works of piety and charity, as that we may meet it again with comfort on the other side death and the grave. If we would act wisely, we must be as diligent and industrious to employ our riches in the acts of piety and charity, in order to promote our future and eternal welfare, as worldly men are in laying them out to the greatest temporal profit, in making to themselves friends with them, and securing other secular interests. So Dr. Clarke.

Now let us consider,

First, The parable itself, in which all the children of men are represented as *stewards* of what they have in this world, and we are but stewards; whatever we have, the property of it is God's, we have only the use of it, and that according to the direction of our great Lord, and for his honour. Rabbi Kimchi, quoted by Dr. Lightfoot, saith, "This world is a house; heaven, the roof; the stars, the lights; the earth, with its fruits, a table spread: The Master of the house is the holy and blessed God; man is the steward, into whose hands the goods of this house are delivered; if he behave himself well he shall find favour in the eyes of his Lord, if not, he shall be turned out of his stewardship." Now,

1. Here is the *dishonesty* of this steward. He wasted his lord's goods, embezzelled them, misapplied them, or through carelessness suffered them to be lost and damaged; and for this he was accused to his lord, ver. 1. We are all *liable* to the same charge; we have not made a due improvement of what God has intrusted us with in this world, but have perverted his purpose. And that we may not be for this *judged of our Lord*, it concerns us to *judge ourselves*.

2. His *discharge* out of his place. His lord called for him, and said, *How is it that I hear this of thee?* I expected better things from thee: He speaks as one sorry to find himself disappointed in him, and under a necessity of dismissing him from his service: It troubles him to hear it, but the steward cannot deny it, and therefore there is no remedy, he must make up his accounts, and be gone in a little time, ver. 2. Now this is designed to teach us, (1.) That we must all of us shortly be discharged from our *stewardship* in this world; we must not always enjoy those things we now enjoy: Death will come and *dismiss* us from our stewardship, will *deprive* us of the abilities and opportunities we now have of doing good, and others will come in our places, and have the same. (2.) That our discharge from our stewardship at death is *just*, and what we have deserved, for we have wasted our Lord's goods, and thereby forfeited our trust, so that we cannot complain of any wrong done us. (3.) That when our stewardship is taken from us, we must *give an account* of it to our Lord; *after death the judgment*; both which, both our discharge and our account we are fairly warned of, and ought to be frequently thinking of.

3. His *after-wisdom*; now he began to consider, *What shall I do?* ver. 3. He would have done well to have considered that, before he had so foolishly thrown himself out of a good place by his unfaithfulness; but it is better to *consider* late, than never. Note, Since we have all received notice that we must shortly be turned out of our stewardship, we are concerned to consider what we shall do then? He must live, which way shall he have a livelihood? (1.) He knows he has not such a degree of industry in him as to get his living by work; *I cannot dig*; I cannot earn my bread by my labour; but why can he not dig? It doth not appear that he was either old or lame, but the truth is he is *lazy*; his *cannot* is a *will not*; it is not a natural, but a moral disability that he labours under; if his master, when he turned him out of the stewardship, had continued him in his service as a labourer, and set a task-master over him, he would have made him dig. He *cannot dig*, for he was never used to it; now this intimates, that we cannot get a livelihood for our souls, by any labour for this world; nor indeed can do any thing to purpose for our souls, by any ability of our own.

(2.) He knows he has not such a degree of *humility* as to get his bread by begging; *to beg I am ashamed*. This was the language of his pride, as the former of his slothfulness; those whom God, in his providence, has disabled to help themselves, should not be *ashamed* to ask relief of others. This steward had more reason to be ashamed of his cheating his master than of begging his bread.

(3.) He therefore determines to make friends of his lord's debtors, or his tenants that were behind of their rent, and had

given notes under their hands for it, ver. 4. *I am resolved what to do*. My lord turns me out of his house, I have none of my own to go to, I am acquainted with my lord's tenants, have done them many a good turn, and now I will do them one more, which will so oblige them, that they will bid me welcome to their houses, and the best entertainment they afford; and so long as I live, at least, till I can better dispose of myself, I will quarter upon them, and go from one good house to another. Now the way he would take to make them his friends, was by striking off a considerable part of their debt to his lord, and giving it in his accounts so much less than it was. Accordingly he sent for one that owed his lord a hundred measures of oil, in that commodity he paid his rent, *Take thy bill*, said he, here it is, and *sit down quickly, and write fifty*, ver. 6. so he reduced his debt to the one half. Observe, He was in haste to have it done, *sit down quickly* and do it, lest we be taken treating, and suspected. He took another that owed his lord an hundred measures of wheat, and from his bill he cut off a fifth part, and bid him write *four score*, ver. 7. and probably he did the like by others; abating more or less, according as he expected kindness from them. See here what uncertain things our worldly possessions are; and most so to those that have most of them, who devolve upon others all the care concerning them, and so put it into their power to *cheat them*, because they will not trouble themselves to see with their own eyes. See also what treachery is to be found, even among those in whom trust is reposed. How hard is it to find one that a confidence can be reposed in? Let God be true, but every man a liar. Though this steward is turned out for dealing dishonestly, yet still he doth so. So rare is it for men to mend of a fault, though they smart for it.

4. The approbation of this, ver. 8. *The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely*. Whether it be meant of his lord, the lord of that servant, who, though he could not but be angry at his knavery, yet was pleased with his ingenuity and policy for himself; but taking it so, the latter part of the verse must be the words of our Lord, and therefore I think the whole is meant of him. Christ did, as it were, say, Now commend me to such a man as this, that knows how to do well for himself, how to improve a present opportunity, and how to provide for a future necessity. He doth not commend him because he had done *falsely* to his master, but because he had done *wisely* for himself. Yet perhaps herein he did well for his master too, and but justly with the tenants. He knew what *hard bargains* he had set them, so that they could not pay their rent, but, having been screwed up by his rigour, were thrown *behind hand*, and they and their families were likely to go to ruin; and in consideration of this, he now, at going off, did as he ought to do, both in justice and charity, not only easing them of part of their arrears, but abating of their rent for the future. *How much owest thou?* may be meant, what rent dost thou sit upon? Come, saith he, I will set thee an easier bargain, and yet no easier than what thou oughtest to have. He had been *all for his lord*, but now he begins to consider the tenants, that he might have *their favour* when he had lost his lord's. The abating of their rent would be a lasting kindness, and more likely to engage them than abating their arrears only.

Now this forecast of his, for a comfortable subsistence in this world, shames our improvidence for another world. *The children of this world*, that chuse and have their portions in it, are *wiser for their generation*, act more considerately, and better consult their worldly interest and advantage than the *children of light*, who enjoy the gospel, in *their generation*, i. e. in the concerns of their souls and eternity. Note, 1. The wisdom of worldly people in the concerns of this world, is to be *imitated* by us in the concerns of our souls; it is their principle to improve their opportunities; to do that first which is most needful; in summer and harvest to lay up for winter; to take a good bargain when it is offered them; to trust the *faithful* and not the *false*; O that we were thus wise in our spiritual affairs! 2. The children of light are commonly *out-done* by the children of this world. Not that the children of this world are *truly wise*, but only in *their generation*; but in that they are *wiser than the children of light in theirs*; for though we are told that we must shortly be *turned out of our stewardship*, yet we do not provide as we should for such a day; we live as if we were to be *here always*, and as if there we not *another life after this*; and are not solicitous as this steward was, to provide for *hereafter*; though as *children of the light*, that light to which life and immortality are brought by the gospel, we cannot but see *another world* before us, yet do not prepare for it, do not send our best effects and best affections thither, as we should.

5. The application of this parable; and the inferences drawn from it, ver. 9. *I say unto you*, you my disciples, for to them this parable is directed, ver. 1. Though you have but little in this world, consider how you may do good with that little: Observe,

(1.) What it is that our Lord Jesus here exhorts us to; to provide for our comfortable reception, to the happiness of another world, by making good use of our possessions and enjoyments in this world, *Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*, as the steward with his lord's goods made his lord's tenants



tenants his friends. It is the wisdom of the men of this world so to manage their money, as that they may have the benefit of it hereafter, and not for the present only; therefore they put it out to interest, buy land with it, put it into this or the other fund. Now we should learn of them to make use of our money, so as that we may be the better for it hereafter in another world, as they do, in hopes to be the better for it hereafter in this world; so cast it upon the waters, as that we may find it again after many days, Eccl. xi. 1. And in our case, though whatever we have, is our Lord's goods; yet as long as we dispose of them among our Lord's tenants, and for their advantage, it is so far reckoned from being a wrong to our Lord, that it is duty to him, as well as policy for ourselves.

Note, 1. The things of this world are the *mammon of unrighteousness*, or the false *mammon*; not only because often got by fraud and unrighteousness, but because those who trust to it for satisfaction and happiness will certainly be deceived; for riches are perishing things, and will disappoint those that raise their expectations from them. 2. Though this *mammon of unrighteousness* is not to be trusted to for a happiness, yet it may and must be made use of in subserviency to our pursuits of that which is our happiness. Though we cannot find true satisfaction in it, yet we may make to ourselves friends with it, not by way of purchase or merit, but recommendation; so we may make God and Christ our friends, the good angels and saints our friends, and the poor our friends; and it is a desirable thing to be befriended in the account and state to come. 3. At death we must all fail, *ὅταν ἐκλήπηται, when ye suffer an eclipse*. Death eclipseth us. A tradesman is said to fail when he becomes a bankrupt; we must all thus fail shortly; death shuts up the shop, seals up the hand. Our comforts and enjoyments on earth will all fail us; flesh and heart fail. 4. It ought to be our great concern to make it sure to ourselves, that when we fail at death, we may be received into everlasting habitations in heaven. The habitations in heaven are everlasting; not made with hands, but eternal, 2 Cor. v. 1. Christ is gone before, to prepare a place for those that are his, and is there ready to receive them; the bosom of Abraham is ready to receive them, and when a guard of angels carries them thither, a choir of angels is ready to receive them there. The poor saints that are gone before to glory, will receive those that in this world distributed to their necessities. 5. This is a good reason why we should use what we have in the world for the honour of God, and the good of our brethren, that thus we may with them lay up in store a good bond, a good security, a good foundation for the time to come, for an eternity to come: See 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19. which explains this here.

(2.) With what arguments he presseth this exhortation; he abounds in works of piety and charity.

1. If we do not make a right use of the gifts of God's providence, how can we expect from him those present and future comforts which are the gifts of his spiritual grace. Our Saviour here compares these, and shews that though our faithful use of the things of this world, cannot be thought to merit any favour at the hand of God, yet our unfaithfulness in the use of them may be justly reckoned a forfeiture of that grace which is necessary to bring us to glory, and that is it which our Saviour here shews, ver. 10, 11, 12.

(1.) The riches of this world are the *less*; grace and glory are the *greater*: Now if we be unfaithful in the less, if we use the things in this world to other purposes than those for which they were given us, it may justly be feared we shall be so in the gifts of God's grace, that we will receive them also in vain, and therefore they will be denied us. *He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much*. He that serves God, and doth good with his money will serve God, and do good with the more noble and valuable talents of wisdom and grace, and spiritual gifts, and the earnest of heaven; but he that buries the *one talent* of this world's wealth, will never improve the *five talents* of spiritual riches. God withholds his grace from covetous worldly people, more than we are aware of.

(2.) The riches of this world are *deceitful* and *uncertain*, it is the *unrighteous mammon*, which is hastening from us apace, and which, if we will make any advantage of, we must bestir ourselves quickly; but if we do not, how can we expect to be intrusted with spiritual riches, which are the only *true riches*? ver. 11. Let us be convinced of this, that those are *truly rich*, and *very rich*, who are rich in faith, and rich towards God, rich in Christ, and in the promises, and in the earnest of heaven; and therefore let us lay up our treasure in them, and expect our portion from them, and mind them in the first place, the *kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof*, and then, if other things be added to us, use them in *ordine ad spiritualia*, so as that by using them well we may take the faster hold of the *true riches*, and may be qualified to receive yet more grace from God, for *God giveth to a man that is good in his sight*, that is, to a free-hearted charitable man, *wisdom and knowledge, and joy*, Eccl. ii. 26, that is, to a man that is faithful in the *unrighteous mammon*, he gives the *true riches*.

(3.) The riches of this world are *another man's*; they are *τὰ ἀλλότεια*, not *our own*, for they are *foreign* to the soul and its nature and interest: They are not *our own*, for they are God's,

his title to them is prior and superior to ours; the property remains in him, we are but usufructuaries; they are *another man's*; we have them from others; we use them for others; and *what good has the owner from his goods that increase, save the beholding of them with his eyes*, while still they are increased that eat them; and we must shortly leave them to others, and we know not who. But spiritual and eternal riches are *our own*, they enter into the soul that becomes possessed of them, and inseparably; they are a good part that will never be taken away from us: If we make Christ our own, and the promises our own, and heaven our own, we have that which we may truly call *our own*. But how can we expect God should *enrich us* with these, if we do not serve him with our worldly possessions, which we are but stewards of?

2. We have no other way to prove ourselves the servants of God, but by giving up ourselves so entirely to his service as to make *mammon*, that is, all our worldly gain, serviceable to us in his service, ver. 13. *No servant can serve two masters*, whose commands are so inconsistent as those of God and *mammon* are. If a man will love the world, and hold to that, it cannot be but he will hate God, and despise him: He will make all his pretensions of religion truckle to his secular interests and designs, and the things of God shall be made to help him in serving and seeking the world; but, on the other hand, if a man will love God and adhere to him, he will comparatively hate the world (when ever God and the world come in competition) and will despise it, and make all his business and success in the world some way or other conducive to the furtherance of him in the business of religion; and the things of the world shall be made to help him in serving God, and working out his salvation. The matter is here laid plainly before us, *Ye cannot serve God and mammon*. So divided are their interests, that their services can never be compounded. If therefore we be determined to serve God, we must disclaim and abjure the service of the world.

(3.) We are here told what entertainment this doctrine of Christ met with among the Pharisees, and what rebuke he gave them.

1. They wickedly ridiculed him, ver. 14. The Pharisees who were covetous heard all these things, and could not contradict him, but they derided him. Let us consider this, (1.) As their *sin*, and the fruit of their covetousness, which was their reigning sin, their own iniquity. Note, Many that make a great profession of religion, have much knowledge, and abound in the exercise of devotion, yet are ruined by the love of the world; nor doth any thing harden the heart more against the word of Christ. These covetous Pharisees could not bear to have that touched which was their *Delilah*, their darling lust, for this they derided him, *ἐξεμυκτήριζον αὐτόν*. They snuffed up their noses at him, or blew their noses on him; it is an expression of the utmost scorn and disdain imaginable; the word of the Lord was to them a reproach, Jer. vi. 10. They laughed at him for going so contrary to the opinion and way of the world, for endeavouring to recover them from a sin which they were resolved to hold fast. Note, It is common for those to make a jest of the word of God, who are resolved they will not be ruled by it, but they will find at last it cannot be turned off so. (2.) As his suffering. Our Lord Jesus endured not only the contradiction of sinners, but their contempt, they had him in derision all the day. He that spake as never man spake, yet was bantered and ridiculed, that his faithful ministers, whose preaching is unjustly derided may not be disheartened at it. It is no disgrace to a man to be laughed at, but to deserve to be laughed at: Christ's apostles were mocked, and no wonder; the disciple is not greater than his Lord.

2. He justly reproved them; not for deriding him, he knew how to despise the shame; but for deceiving themselves with the shews and colours of piety, when they were strangers to the power of it, ver. 15. Here is,

(1.) Their specious outside; nay, it was a splendid one: (1.) That justified themselves before men, they denied whatever ill was laid to their charge, even by Christ himself: They claimed to be looked upon as men of singular sanctity and devotion, and justified themselves in that claim. *You are they that do that so as none ever did*, that make it your business to court the opinion of men, and, right or wrong, will justify yourselves before the world, so you are notorious for this. (2.) They were highly esteemed among men; men did not only acquit them from any blame they were under, but applauded them, and had them in veneration, not only as good men, but as the best of men: Their sentiments were esteemed as oracles, their directions as laws, and their practices as inviolable prescriptions.

(2.) Their odious inside, which was under the eye of God: He knows your heart, and it is in his sight an abomination, for it is full of all manner of wickedness. Note, 1. It is folly to justify ourselves before men, and to think this enough to bear us out, and bring us off in the judgment of the great day, that men know no ill by us, for God, who knows our hearts, knows that ill by us which none else can know. This ought to check our value for ourselves, and our confidence in ourselves, that God knows our hearts, and how much there is there, for we have reason to abase and distrust ourselves. 2. It is folly to judge of persons and things by the opinion of men concerning them, and to



go down with the stream of vulgar estimate; for that which is *highly esteemed among men*, who judge according to outward appearance, is, perhaps, *an abomination in the sight of God*, who sees things as they are, and whose judgment we are sure is according to truth: And, on the contrary, there are those whom men despise and condemn, that yet are accepted and approved of God, 2 Cor. x. 18.

3. He turned from them to the publicans and sinners, as more likely to be wrought upon by his gospel than those covetous, conceited Pharisees, *ver. 16.* The law and the prophets were indeed *until John*; the Old Testament dispensation, which was *confined* to you Jews, continued till John Baptist appeared, and you seemed to have the monopoly of righteousness and salvation, and you are puffed up with this, and this gains you esteem among men, that you are students in the law and the prophets; but since John Baptist appeared, the *kingdom of God is preached*; a New Testament dispensation, which doth not value men at all for their being doctors of the law, but *every man presseth* into the gospel kingdom; Gentiles as well as Jews, and no man thinks himself bound in good manners to let his betters go before him into it, or to stay till the rulers and the Pharisees have led him that way. It is not so much a political, national constitution as the Jewish economy was, when *salvation was of the Jews*; but it is made a particular, personal concern, and therefore *every man* that is convinced he has a soul to save, and an eternity to provide for, thrusts to get in, lest he should come short by trifling and complimenting. Some give this sense of it; they derided Christ for speaking in contempt of riches, for, thought they, were there not many promises of riches and other temporal good things in the *law and the prophets*; and were not many of the best of God's servants very rich, as Abraham and David? It is true, faith Christ, so it was, but now the kingdom of God is begun to be preached, things take a new turn; now blessed are the poor and the mourners, and the persecuted. The Pharisees to requite the people for their high opinion of them, allowed them in a cheap, easy, formal religion; but, faith Christ, now the *gospel is preached*, the eyes of the people are opened, and as they cannot now have a veneration for the Pharisees as they have had, so they cannot content themselves with such an indifferency in religion as they have been trained up in, but they *press* with a holy violence into the kingdom of God. Note, Those that would go to heaven must take pains, must strive against the stream, must press against the crowd that are going the contrary way.

4. Yet still he protests against any design to invalidate the law, *ver. 17.* *It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, παρελθεῖν, to pass by, to pass away, though the foundations of the earth, and the pillars of heaven are so firmly established, than one tittle of the law to fail.* The moral law is confirmed and ratified, and not one tittle of that fails; the duties enjoined by it are duties still; the sins forbidden by it are sins still: Nay, the precepts of it are explained and enforced by the gospel, and made to appear more spiritual. The ceremonial law is perfected in the gospel, and its shades filled up with the gospel colours; not *one tittle* of that *fails*, for it is found printed off in the gospel, where though the force of it as a law is taken off, yet the figure of it as a type shines very bright, witness the epistle to the Hebrews. And there were some things which were connived at by the law, for the preventing of greater mischiefs, which the gospel has indeed taken away the permission of, but without any detriment or disparagement to the law, for it has thereby reduced them to the primitive intention of the law, as in the case of divorce, *ver. 18.* which we had before, *Matt. v. 32.—xix. 9.* Christ will not allow divorces, for his gospel is intended to strike at the bitter root of mens corrupt appetites and passions, to kill them, and pluck them up, and therefore they must not be so far *indulged*, as that permission did *indulge* them, for the more they are indulged, the more impetuous and head-strong they grow.

19. ¶ There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. 20. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich mans table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abrahams bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried. 23. And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26. And besides all this, between us and you there

is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence. 27. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my fathers house: 28. For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

As the parable of the prodigal son set before us the grace of the gospel, which is encouraging to us all; so this sets before us the *wrath to come*, and is designed for our awakening; and very fast asleep those are in sin that will not be awakened by it. The Pharisees made a jest of Christ's sermon against worldliness; now this parable was intended to make those mockers serious. The tendency of the gospel of Christ is both to reconcile us to poverty and affliction, and to arm us against temptations to worldliness and sensuality: Now this parable by drawing the curtain, and letting us see what will be the end of both in the other world, goes very far in prosecuting those two great intentions.

This parable is not like Christ's other parables, in which spiritual things are represented by similitudes borrowed from worldly things, as those of the sower and the seed, except that of the sheep and goats, the prodigal son, and indeed all the rest but this: But here the *spiritual things themselves* are represented in a narrative or description of the different state of good and bad in this world and the other, yet we need not call it a history of a particular occurrence, but is *matter of fact*, that is true every day; that poor godly people, whom men neglect and trample upon, die away out of their miseries, and go to heavenly bliss and joy, which is made the more pleasant to them by their preceding sorrows: And that rich epicures that live in luxury, and are unmerciful to the poor, die and go into a state of insupportable torment, which is the more grievous and terrible to them, because of the sensual lives they lived; and that there is no gaining any relief for their torments. Is this a parable? What similitude is there in this? The discourse indeed between Abraham and the rich man is only an illustration of the description, to make it the more affecting, like that between God and Satan in the story of Job. Our Saviour came to bring us acquainted with another world, and to shew us the reference which *this* world has to *that*; and here he doth it.

In this description (for so I shall chuse to call it) we may observe,

First, The different condition of a *wicked rich man*, and a *godly poor man* in this world. We know that as some of late, so the Jews of old, were ready to make prosperity one of the marks of a true church, of a good man and a favourite of heaven, so that they could hardly have any favourable thoughts of a *poor man*: This mistake Christ upon all occasions set himself to correct, and here very fully: Where we have,

1. A wicked man, and one that will be for ever miserable, in the height of prosperity, *ver. 19.* *There was a certain rich man*, from the Latin we commonly call him *Dives*, a *rich man*; but as bishop Tillotson observes, he has no name given him, as the poor man has, because it had been invidious to have named any particular rich man in such a description as this, and apt to provoke and gain ill will. But others observe, that Christ would not do the rich man so much honour as to name him, though when perhaps he called his lands by his own name, he thought it should long survive that of the beggar at his gate, which yet is here preserved, when that of the rich man is buried in oblivion. Now we are told concerning this rich man, (1.) That he was *clothed in purple and fine linen*, and that was his *adornings*. He had *fine linen* for *pleasure*, and clean, no doubt, every day; night-linen, and day-linen. He had *purple* for *state*, for that was the wear of princes; which has made some conjecture that Christ had an eye to Herod in it. He never appeared abroad, but it was in great magnificence. (2.) He *fared deliciously and sumptuously every day*. His table was furnished with all the varieties and dainties that nature and art could furnish him with. His side-table richly adorned with plate, and his servants that waited at table in rich liveries; and the guests at his table, no doubt, such as he thought *graced* it.

Well, and what harm was there in all this? It is no sin to be rich, no sin to wear purple and fine linen, nor to keep a plentiful table, if a man's estate will afford it. Nor are we told that he got his estate by fraud, oppression, or extortion, no, nor that he was drunk, or made others drunk; but (1.) Christ would hereby shew, that a man may have a great deal of the wealth and pomp and pleasure of this world, and yet lie and perish for ever under God's wrath and curse. We cannot infer from mens living



living great, either that God loves them, in giving them so much, or that they love God for giving them so much; happiness consists not in these things. (2.) That plenty and pleasure is a very dangerous, and, to many, a fatal temptation to luxury and sensuality, and forgetfulness of God and another world. This man might have been happy, if he had not had great possessions and enjoyments. (3.) That the indulgence of the body, and the ease and pleasure of that, is the ruin of many a soul, and the interest of it. It is true, eating good meat, and wearing good clothes, is lawful; but it is as true, that it often becomes the food and fuel of pride and luxury, and so turns into sin to us. (4.) That feasting ourselves and our friends, and, at the same time, forgetting the distresses of the poor and afflicted, is very provoking to God, and damning to the soul. The sin of this rich man, was not so much his dress, or his diet, but his providing for himself only.

2. Here is a godly man, and one that will be for ever happy, in the depth of adversity and distress, ver. 20. There was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, a beggar of that name, eminently devout, and in great distress, was probably well known among good people at that time: A beggar, suppose such a one as Eleazer, or Lazarus. Some think Eleazar a proper name for any poor man, for it signifies the help of God, which they must fly to, that are destitute of other helps. This poor man was reduced to the last extremity, as miserably as you can lightly suppose a man to be in this world, as to outward things. (1.) His body was full of sores, like Job: To be sick and weak in body, is a great affliction; but sores are more painful to the patient, and more loathsome to those about him. (2.) He was forced to beg his bread, and to take up with such scraps as he could get at rich peoples doors. He was so fore and lame, that he could not go himself, but he was carried by some compassionate hand or other, and laid at the rich man's gate. Note, Those that are not able to help the poor with their purses, should help them with their pains; that cannot lend them a penny, should lend them a hand; that have not wherewithal to give to them themselves, should either bring them, or go for them, to those that have. Lazarus, in his distress, had nothing of his own to subsist on, no relation to go to, nor did the parish take care of him. It is an instance of the degeneracy of the Jewish church at this time, that such a godly man as Lazarus was should be suffered to perish for want of necessary food. Now observe;

1. His expectations from the rich man's table; he desired to be fed with the crumbs, ver. 21. He did not look for a morsel from off his table, though he ought to have had one, one of the best; but would be thankful for the crumbs from under the table, the broken meat, which was the rich man's leavings; nay, the leavings of his dogs. The poor useth intreaties, and must be content with such as they can get. Now this is taken notice of, to shew, (1.) What was the distress, and what the disposition, of the poor man. He was poor, but he was poor in spirit, contentedly poor. He did not lie at the rich man's gate complaining and bawling, and making a noise, but silently and modestly, desiring to be fed with the crumbs. This miserable man was a good man, and in favour with God. Note, It is often the lot of some of the dearest of God's saints and servants, to be greatly afflicted in this world, while wicked people prosper and have abundance; see Psal. lxxiii. 7, 10, 14. Here is a child of wrath, and an heir of hell, sitting in the house, faring sumptuously; and a child of love, and an heir of heaven, lying at the gate, perishing for hunger. And is mens spiritual state to be judged of then by their outward condition? (2.) What was the temper of the rich man towards him; we are not told that he abused him, or forbid him his gate, or did him any harm, but it is intimated, that he slighted him; he had no concern for him, took no care about him. Here was a real object of charity, and a very moving one, which spoke for itself; it was presented to him at his own gate; the poor man had a good character, and a good carriage, and every thing that could recommend him: A little thing would be a great kindness to him, and yet he took no cognizance of his case, did not order him to be taken in, and lodged in the barn, or some of the out-buildings, but let him lie there. Note, It is not enough, not to oppress and trample upon the poor, we shall be found unfaithful stewards of our Lord's goods in the great day, if we do not succour and relieve them. The reason given for the most fearful doom is, I was hungry, and you gave me no meat. I wonder how those rich people, that have read the gospel of Christ, and say they believe it, can be so unconcerned as they often are, in the necessities and miseries of the poor and afflicted.

2. The usage he had from the dogs. The dogs came and licked his sores. The rich man kept a kennel of hounds it may be, or other dogs, for his diversion, and to please his fancy, and those were fed to the full, when poor Lazarus could not get enough to keep him alive. Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for hereafter, that feed their dogs, but neglect the poor: And it is a great aggravation of the uncharitableness of many rich people, that they bestow that upon their fancies and follies, which would supply the necessity, and rejoice the heart of many a good Christian in distress. Those offend God, nay, and they put a contempt upon the human nature, that pamper their dogs and horses, and let the families of their poor neighbours starve. Now those dogs came and licked the sores of poor Lazarus, which may be taken,

(1.) As an aggravation of his misery: His sores were bloody, which tempted the dogs to come and lick them, as they did the blood of Naboth and Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 19. And we read of the tongue of the dogs dipped in the blood of enemies, Psal. lxxviii. 22. They attacked him while he was yet alive, as if he had been already dead, and he had not strength himself to keep them off, nor would any of the servants be so civil as to check them. The dogs were like their master, and thought they fared sumptuously, when they regaled themselves with human gore: Or it may be taken, (2.) As some relief to him in his misery, ελλα και the master was hard hearted towards him, but the dogs came and licked his sores, which mollified and eased them; it is not said they sucked them, but licked them, which was good for them. The dogs were more kind to him than their master was.

Secondly, Here is the different condition of this godly poor man, and this wicked rich man, at, and after death. Hitherto the wicked man seems to have the advantage, but exitus acta probat. Let us wait a while to see the end hereof.

1. They both die, ver. 22. The beggar died. The rich man also died. Death is the common lot of rich and poor, godly and ungodly, there they meet together. One dieth in his full strength, and another in the bitterness of his soul, but they shall lie down alike in the dust, Job xxi. 26. Death favours not either the rich man for his riches, or the poor man for his poverty. Saints die, that they may bring their sorrows to an end, and may enter upon their joys: Sinners die that they may go to give up their account. It concerns both rich and poor to prepare for death, for it waits for them both. Mors sceptrum ligonibus æquat; æquo pulsant pede pauperum tabernas, regumque turres.

2. The beggar died first: God many times takes godly people out of the world, when he leaves the wicked to flourish still. It was an advantage to the beggar, that such a speedy end was put to his miseries, and since he could find no other shelter, or resting place, he was hid in the grave, where the weary are at rest.

3. The rich man died and was buried. Nothing is said of the interment of the poor man, they digged a hole any where, and tumbled his body in, without any solemnity; he was buried with the burial of an ass: Nay, it is well if they that let the dogs lick his sores, did not let them gnaw his bones. But the rich man had a pompous funeral, lay in state; had a train of mourners to attend him to his grave, and a stately monument set up over it; probably he had a funeral oration, in praise of him, and his generous way of living, and the good table he kept, which those would commend that had been feasted at it. It is said of the wicked man, that he is brought to the grave, with no small ado, and laid in the tomb, and the clouds of the valley, were it possible, are made sweet to him, Job xxi. 32, 33. How foreign is the ceremony of a funeral, to the happiness of the man.

4. The beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. How much did the honour done to his soul, by this convoy of it to its rest, exceed the honour done to the rich man, by the carrying of his body with so much magnificence to its grave? Observe, (1.) His soul existed in a state of separation from its body. It did not die, or fall asleep with the body, his candle was not put out with him, but lived and acted, and knew what it did, and what was done to it. (2.) His soul removed to another world, to the world of spirits; it returned to God who gave it to its native country; this is implied in its being carried. The spirit of a man goes upward. (3.) Angels took care of it, it was carried by angels. They are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, not only while they live, but when they die, and have a charge concerning them, to bear them up in their hands, not only in their journeys too and fro on earth, but in their great journey to their long home in heaven, to be both their guide and their guard, through regions unknown and unsafe. The soul of man, if not chained to this earth, and clogged by it, as unsanctified souls are, has, in itself, an elastick virtue, by which it springs upward, as soon as it gets clear of the body; but Christ will not trust those that are his to that, and therefore will send special messengers to fetch them to himself. One angel, one would think, were sufficient, but here are more, as were sent for Elijah. Amasis, king of Egypt, had his chariot drawn by kings, but what was that honour to this? Saints ascend in the virtue of Christ's ascension; but this convoy of angels is added, for state and decorum; saints shall be brought home, not only safely, but honourably. What were the bearers at the rich man's funeral, though probably those of the first rank, compared with Lazarus's bearers? The angels were not shy of touching him, for his sores were on his body, not on his soul, that was presented to God, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Now, blessed angels, said a good man just expiring, now come and do your office. (4.) It was carried into Abraham's bosom. The Jews expressed the happiness of the righteous at death, three ways; they go to the garden of Eden; they go to be under the throne of glory, and they go to the bosom of Abraham, and that is it our Saviour here makes use of. Abraham was the father of the faithful; and whither should the souls of the faithful be gathered, but to him, who, as a tender father, lays them in his bosom, especially at their first coming, to bid them welcome, and to refresh them when newly come, from the sorrows and fatigues of this world. He was carried



ried to his bosom, i. e. to feast with him, for at feasts the guests are said to lean on one another's breasts; and the saints in heaven sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham was a great and rich man, yet in heaven he doth not disdain to lay poor Lazarus in his bosom. Rich saints and poor, meet in heaven. This poor Lazarus, that might not be admitted within the rich man's gate, is conducted into the dining-room, into the bed-chamber of the heavenly palace, and he is laid in the bosom of Abraham, whom the rich glutton scorned to set with the dogs of his flock.

5. The next news you hear of the rich man, after the account of his death and burial, is, that in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment, ver. 23.

1. His state is very miserable. He is in hell, in *hades*, in the state of separate souls, and there he is in the utmost misery and anguish possible. As the souls of the faithful, immediately after they are delivered from the burthen of the flesh, are in joy and felicity; so wicked and un sanctified souls, immediately after they are fetched from the pleasures of the flesh by death, are in misery and torment endless, useless, and remediless, and which will be much increased and completed at the resurrection. This rich man had entirely devoted himself to the pleasures of the world of sense, was wholly taken up with them, and took up with them for his portion, and therefore was wholly unfit for the pleasures of the world of spirits, and to such a carnal mind as his, they would indeed be no pleasure, nor could he have any relish of them, and therefore he is, of course, excluded from them. Yet that is not all, he was hard-hearted to God's poor, and therefore he is not only cut off from mercy, but he has judgment without mercy, and falls under a punishment of sense, as well as a punishment of loss.

2. The misery of his state is aggravated by his knowledge of the happiness of Lazarus. He lift up his eyes, and sees Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. It is the soul that is in torment, and they are the eyes of the mind that are lifted up: He now began to consider what was become of Lazarus, he doth not find him where he is, nay, he plainly sees him, and with as much assurance, as if he had seen him with his bodily eyes, afar off in the bosom of Abraham. This same aggravation of the miseries of the damned we had before, chap. xiii. 28. *Ye shall see Abraham, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.* (1.) He saw Abraham afar off. To see Abraham, we would think a pleasing sight; but to see him afar off, was a tormenting sight. Near him he saw devils and damned companions, frightful sights, and painful ones; afar off he saw Abraham. Note, Every sight in hell is aggravating. (2.) He saw Lazarus in his bosom, that same Lazarus whom he had looked upon with so much scorn and contempt as not worthy his notice, he now sees preferred, and to be envied. The sight of him brought to his mind his own cruel and barbarous carriage towards him; and the sight of him in that happiness made his own misery the more grievous.

Thirdly, Here is an account of what passed between the rich man and Abraham, in the separate state, a state of separation one from another, and of both from this world: And though it is probable there will not be, nor are, any such dialogues or discourses, between glorified saints, and damned sinners, yet it is very proper, and what is usually done in descriptions, especially such as are designed to be pathetic and moving, by such dialogues, to represent what will be the mind and sentiments, both of the one, and of the other. And since we find damned sinners tormented in the presence of the Lamb, Rev. xiv. 10. and the faithful servants of God looking upon them that have transgressed the covenant, there where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched, Isa. lxvi. 23, 24. Such a discourse as this is not incongruous to be supposed.

Now in this discourse we have,

1. The request which the rich man made to Abraham for some mitigation of his present misery, ver. 24. Seeing Abraham afar off, he cried to him, cried aloud, as one in earnest, and as one in pain and misery, mixing shrieks with his petitions, to enforce them by moving compassion. He that used to command aloud, now begs aloud; louder than ever Lazarus did at his gate. The songs of his riot and revels are all turned into lamentations. Observe here,

(1.) The title he gives to Abraham. *Father Abraham.* Note, There are many in hell that can call Abraham father; that were Abraham's seed after the flesh: Nay, and many that were, in name and profession the children of the covenant, made with Abraham. Perhaps this rich man, in his carnal mirth, had ridiculed Abraham, and the story of Abraham, as the scoffers of the latter days do; but now he gives him a title of respect, *father Abraham.* Note, The day is coming, when wicked men will be glad to scrape acquaintance with the righteous, and to claim kindred to them, though now they slight them. Abraham in this description represents Christ, for to him all judgment is committed, and it is his mind that Abraham here speaks. Those that now slight Christ, will shortly make their court to him, *Lord, Lord.*

(2.) The representation he makes to him of his present deplorable condition; *I am tormented in this flame.* It is the torment of his soul that he complains of, and therefore such a fire as will operate upon souls; and such a fire the wrath of God is fastening upon a guilty conscience; such a fire horror of mind is, and the reproaches of a self-accusing, self-condemning heart. Nothing

more painful and terrible to the body, than to be tormented with fire; by that therefore the miseries and agonies of damned souls are represented.

(3.) His request to Abraham, in consideration of this misery. *Have mercy on me.* Note, The day is coming when those that make light of divine mercy will beg hard for it. O for mercy, mercy, when the day of mercy is over, and offers of mercy no more made. He that had no mercy on Lazarus, yet expects Lazarus should have mercy on him, for, thinks he, Lazarus is better natured than ever I was. The particular favour he begs is, *Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue.* (1.) Here he complains of the torment of his tongue particularly, as if he were more tormented there, than in any other part, the punishment answering the sin. The tongue is one of the organs of speech, and by the torment of that, he is put in mind of all the wicked words that he had spoken against God and man; his cursing and swearing, and blasphemy, all his hard speeches, and filthy speeches; by his words he is condemned, and therefore in his tongue he is tormented. The tongue is also one of the organs of tasting; and therefore the torments of that, will mind him of his inordinate relish of the delights of sense, which he had rolled under his tongue. (2.) He desires a drop of water to cool his tongue. He doth not say, Father Abraham, send for me to thy bosom, to lie where Lazarus lies; un sanctified souls do not, cannot, truly desire the happiness of heaven: Nay, he doth not say, Father Abraham, order me a release from this misery, help me out of this pit, for he utterly despaired of that; but he asks as small a thing as could be asked, a drop of water, to cool his tongue for one moment. (3.) He desires that Lazarus might bring it. I have sometimes suspected that he had herein an ill design upon Lazarus, and hoped, if he could get him within his reach, he would keep him from returning to the bosom of Abraham again. The heart that is filled with rage against God, is filled with rage against the people of God. But we will think more charitably even of a damned sinner, and suppose, he intended here to shew respect to Lazarus, as one whom he would now gladly be beholden to. He names him, because he knows him, and thinks Lazarus will not be unwilling to do him this good office for old acquaintance sake. Grotius here quotes Plato, describing the torments of wicked souls, and among other things he saith, they are continually raving on those whom they have murdered, or been any way injurious to, calling upon them to forgive them the wrongs they did them. Note, There is a day coming, when those who now hate and despise the people of God, would gladly receive kindness from them.

2. The reply which Abraham gave to this request: In general, he did not grant it: He would not allow him one drop of water to cool his tongue. Note, The damned in hell shall not have any the least abatement or mitigation of their torment. If we now improve the day of our opportunities, we may have a full and lasting satisfaction in the streams of mercy; but if we now slight the offer, it will be in vain in hell to expect the least drop of mercy. See how justly this rich man is paid in his own coin. He that denied a crumb, is denied a drop. Now it is said to us, *Ask, and it shall be given you;* but if we let slip this accepted time, we may ask, and it shall not be given us. But this is not all, had Abraham only said, you shall have nothing to abate your torment, it had been sad; but he saith a great deal which would add to his torment, and make the flame the hotter, for every thing in hell will be tormenting.

(1.) He calls him *son*, a kind and civil title; but here serves only to aggravate the denial of his request, which shut up the bowels of the compassion of a father from him. He had been a son, but a rebellious one, and now an abandoned disinherited one. See the folly of those who rely on that plea, *we have Abraham to our father*, when we find one in hell, and likely to be there for ever, whom Abraham calls *son*.

(2.) He puts him in mind of what had been both his own condition, and the condition of Lazarus, in their life-time. *Son, remember;* this is a cutting word. The memories of damned souls will be their tormenters, and conscience will then be awakened and stirred up to do its office, which here they would not suffer it to do. Nothing will bring more oil to the flames of hell, than *son, remember.* Now sinners are called upon to remember, but they do not, they will not, they find ways to avoid it, *son, remember thy Creator, thy Redeemer, remember thy latter end;* but they can turn a deaf ear to these memento's, and forget that for which they have their memories; justly therefore will their everlasting misery arise from a *son, remember*, which they will not be able to turn a deaf ear to. What a dreadful peal will this ring in our ears, *son, remember* the many warnings that were given thee, not to come to this place of torment, which thou wouldst not regard; remember the fair offers made thee of eternal life and glory, which thou wouldst not accept! But that which he is here put in mind of is, (1.) That thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things. He doth not tell him he had abused them, but he had received them. Remember what a bountiful benefactor God has been to thee, how ready he was to do thee good, thou canst not therefore say he owes thee any thing, no, not a drop of water. What we gave thee, thou receivedst, and that was all, thou never gavest him a receipt for them, in a thankful acknowledgment



ment of them, much less didst thou ever make any grateful return for them, or improvement of them; thou hast been the grave of God's blessings, on which they were buried, not the field of them, in which they were sown. Thou receivedst *thy good things*, i. e. thou receivedst them, and usedst them, as if they had been *thine own*, and thou hadst not been at all accountable for them: Or rather, they were the things which thou didst chuse for *thy good things*, which were, in thine eye, the *best things*, which thou didst content thyself with, and portion thyself in: Thou hadst meat and drink, and clothes of the richest and finest, and those were the things thou didst place thine happiness in, they were *thy reward*, *thy consolation*, the *penny* thou didst agree for, and thou hast had it. Thou wast for the *good things of thy life-time*, and hadst no thought of better things in another life, and therefore hast no reason to expect them. The day of thy *good things* is past and gone, and now is the day of thine *evil things*, of recompence for all thine evil deeds. Thou hast already had the last drop of the *vials of mercy*, that thou couldst expect to fall to thy share; and there remains nothing but *vials of wrath* without mixture.

(2.) Remember too what *evil things Lazarus received*. Thou enviest him his happiness here, but think what a large share of miseries he had in his life-time: Thou hadst as much good as could be thought to fall to the lot of *so ill a man*, and he as much evil as could be thought to fall to the lot of *so good a man*. He received his evil things, i. e. he bore them patiently, received them from the hand of God, as Job did, chap. ii. 10. *Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also?* He received them as physick appointed for the cure of his spiritual distempers, and the cure was effected. As wicked people have *good things* only in this life, and at death they are for ever separated from all good; so godly people have evil things only in this life, and at death they are for ever put out of the reach of them. Now Abraham, by putting him in mind of both these together, awaking his conscience, to mind him how he had carried it towards Lazarus when he was revelling in his *good things*, and Lazarus groaning under his *evil things*; he cannot forget that then he would not help Lazarus, and then how could he expect that Lazarus should now help him? Had Lazarus in his life-time afterwards grown rich, and he poor, Lazarus would have thought it his duty to relieve him, and not to have upbraided him with his former unkindness: but in the future state of recompence and retribution, those that are now dealt with, both by God and man better than they deserve, must expect to be rewarded *every man according to his works*.

(3.) He puts him in mind of Lazarus's present bliss, and his own misery. *But now* the tables are turned, and so they must abide for ever; *now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*. He did not need to be told that he was tormented, he felt it to his cost, he knew likewise that one that lay in the bosom of Abraham could not but be comforted there, yet Abraham puts him in mind of it, that he might by comparing one thing with another, observe the *righteousness of God*, in recompensing tribulation to them who trouble his people, and to those who are troubled, rest, 2 Thes. i. 6, 7. Observe, (1.) Heaven is comfort, and hell is torment: heaven is joy, hell is weeping and wailing, and pain in perfection. (2.) The soul as soon as it leaves the body, goes either to heaven or hell, to comfort or torment immediately, and doth not sleep or go into purgatory. (3.) Herein will be heaven indeed to those that go thither through many and great calamities in this world; those that had grace but little of the comfort of it here, perhaps their souls refused to be comforted; yet when they are fallen asleep in Christ, you may truly say, *Now they are comforted*: now all their tears are wiped away, and all their fears are vanished. In heaven there is everlasting consolation. And, on the other hand, hell will be hell indeed to those that go thither from the midst of the enjoyment of all the delights and pleasures of sense; to them the torture is the greater, as temporal calamities are described to be to the tender and delicate woman, that would not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground, for tenderness and delicacy, Deut. xxviii. 56.

(4.) He assures him it was to no purpose to think of having any relief by the ministry of Lazarus: for, ver. 26. *Besides all this*, worse yet, *between us and you there is a great gulph fixed*, an impassable one. A great chasm, that so there can be no communication between glorified saints and damned sinners. (1.) The kindest saint in heaven cannot make a visit to the congregation of the dead and damned to comfort or relieve any there, that when time was, were their friends. *They that would pass from hence to you cannot*; they cannot leave beholding the face of their Father, nor the work about his throne, to fetch water for you; that is no part of their business. (2.) The daringest sinner in hell cannot force his way out of that prison, cannot get over that great gulph. *They cannot pass to us, that would come from thence*. It was not to be expected, for the door of mercy is shut, the bridge is drawn; there is no coming out upon parol or bail, no, not for one hour. In this world blessed be God there is no gulph fixed between a state of nature and grace, but we may pass from the one to the other: from sin to God; but if we die in our sins, if we throw ourselves into the pit of destruction, there is no coming out. It is a pit in which there is no water, and out of which there is no redemption. The decree and counsel of God has fixed

this gulph, which all the world cannot unfix. This abandons this miserable creature to despair; it is now too late for any change of his condition, or any the least relief: it might have been prevented in time, but it cannot now be remedied to eternity. The state of damned sinners is fixed by an irreverfible and unalterable sentence. A stone is rolled to the door of the pit, which cannot be rolled back.

3. The further request he had to make to his father Abraham; not for himself, his mouth is stopped, and he has not a word to say in answer to Abraham's denial of a drop of water: Damned sinners are made to know that the sentence they are under is just, and they cannot alleviate their own misery by making any objection against it. And since he cannot obtain a drop of water to cool his tongue, we may suppose he gnawed his tongue for pain, as those are said to do on whom one of the vials of God's wrath is poured out, Rev. xvi. 10. the hideous shrieks and outcries which we may suppose to be now uttered by him; but since he has an opportunity of speaking to Abraham, he will improve it for his relations whom he had left behind, since he cannot improve it for his own advantage. Now as to this,

1. He begs that Lazarus might be sent to his Father's house, upon an errand thither, ver. 27. *I pray thee therefore, Father*. Again he calls upon Abraham, and in this request he is importunate, *I pray thee*. O deny me not this. When he was on earth, he might have prayed and been heard, but now he prays in vain. Therefore because thou hast denied me the former request, surely, thou wilt be so compassionate as not to deny this: Or, therefore, because there is a great gulph fixed, seeing there is no getting out hence when they are once here, O send to prevent their coming hither. Or though there is a great gulph fixed between you and me, yet since there is no such gulph fixed between you and them, send him thither. Send him back to my father's house; he knows well enough where it is, has been there many a time, by the same token that he was denied the crumbs that fell from the table. He knows I have five brethren there, if he appear to them they will know him, and will regard what he saith, for they knew him to be an honest man; let him testify to them; let him tell them what condition I am in, and that I brought myself to it by my luxury and sensuality, and my unmercifulness to the poor. Let him warn them not to tread in my steps, nor to go on in the way wherein I led them, and left them, lest they also come into this place of torment, ver. 28. Some observe, that he speaks of five brethren only, whence they infer that he had no children, else he would have mentioned them, and then it was an aggravation of his uncharitableness that he had no children to provide for. Now he would have them stopped in their sinful course. He doth not say, give me leave to go to them, that I may testify to them, for he knew that there was a gulph fixed, and despaired of a permission so favourable to himself: his going would frighten them out of their wits, but send Lazarus, whose address will be less terrible, and yet his testimony sufficient to frighten them out of their sins.

Now he desired the preventing of their ruin, partly in tenderness to them, for whom he could not but retain a natural affection; he knew their temper, their temptations, their ignorance, their infidelity, their inconsideration, and wished to prevent the destruction they were running into. Partly in tenderness to himself, for their coming to him to that place of torment would but aggravate the misery to him, who had helped to shew them the way thither, as the sight of Lazarus helped to aggravate his misery. When partners in sin come to be sharers in wo, as tares bound in bundles for the fire, they will be a terror to one another.

2. Abraham denies him this favour too. There is no request granted in hell: those who make the rich man's praying to Abraham a justification of their praying to saints departed, as they are far to seek for proofs, when the practice of a damned sinner must be valued for an example, so they have little encouragement to follow the example, when all his prayers were made in vain. Abraham leaves them to the testimony of Moses, and the prophets, the ordinary means of conviction and conversion, they have the written word which they may read, and hear read; let them attend to that sure word of prophecy, for God will not go out of the common method of his grace for them. Here is their privilege, they have Moses and the prophets, and their duty, let them hear them, and mix faith with them, and that will be sufficient to keep them from this place of torment. By this it appears that there is sufficient evidence in the Old Testament, in Moses and the prophets, to convince those that will hear them impartially, that there is another life after this, and a state of rewards and punishments for good and bad men, for that was the thing which the rich man would have his brethren assured of, and for that they are turned over to Moses and the prophets.

3. He urgeth his request yet further, ver. 30. *Nay, father Abraham*, give me leave to press this. It is true, they have Moses and the prophets, and if they would but give a due regard to them, it would be sufficient; but they do not, they will not, yet it may be hoped, if one went to them from the dead, they would repent; that would be a more sensible conviction to them. They are used to Moses and the prophets, and therefore regard them the less, but this would be a new thing, and more startling; surely that



that would bring them to *repent*, and to change their wicked habit and course of life. Note, Foolish men are apt to think any method of conviction better than that which God has chosen and appointed.

4. Abraham insists upon the denial of it, with a conclusive reason, *ver. 31. If they hear not Moses and the prophets*, and will not believe the testimony, nor take the warning they give, *neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead*: If they regard not the publick revelation which is confirmed by miracles, neither would they be wrought upon by a private testimony to themselves. (1.) The matter was long since settled upon trial, that God should speak by Moses, and such prophets, and not by immediate messengers from heaven: Israel chose it in mount Sinai, because they could not bear the terrors of such expresses. (2.) A messenger from the dead could say no more than what is said in the scriptures, nor say it with more authority. (3.) There would be every jot as much reason to suspect that to be a cheat and a delusion, as to suspect the scriptures to be so, and much more; and infidels in one case would certainly be so in another. (4.) The same strength of corruption that breaks through the convictions of the written word, would certainly triumph over those by a witness *from the dead*: and though a sinner might be frightened at first, by such a testimony, when the fright was over, he would soon return to his hardness. (5.) The scripture is now the ordinary way of God's making known his mind to us, and it is sufficient, and it is presumption for us to prescribe any other way, nor have we any ground to expect or pray for the grace of God to work upon us in any other way, abstracted from that, and when that is rejected and set aside. This that our Saviour here said, was soon after verified in the unbelieving Jews, who would not hear Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, and then would not be persuaded, though *Lazarus rose from the dead*; (and perhaps it was with some eye to him, that Christ named this poor man Lazarus) nay, they consulted to put him to death, and did put him that raised him to death, and would not be persuaded by him neither, though he also *rose from the dead*. When Eutychus was raised to life, the people that were present continued to hear Paul preach, but did not turn to enquire of him, *Acts xx. 10, 11*. Let us not therefore desire visions and apparitions, nor seek to the dead, but *to the law and to the testimony*, *Isa. viii. 19, 20*. for that is *the sure word of prophecy*, which we may depend upon.

## C H A P. XVII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Some particular discourses Christ had with his disciples, in which he teaches them to take heed of giving offence, and to forgive the injuries done them, *ver. 1—4*. Encourageth them to pray for the increase of their faith, *ver. 5, 6*. And then teacheth them humility, whatever service they had done for God, *ver. 7—10*. (2.) His cleansing of ten lepers, and the thanks he had from one of them only, and he a Samaritan, *ver. 11—19*. (3.) His discourse with his disciples upon occasion of an enquiry of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God shall appear, *ver. 20—37*.

1. **T**HEN said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but wo unto him through whom they come. 2. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3. ¶ Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. 5. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. 6. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. 7. But which of you having a servant plowing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go, and sit down to meat? 8. And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? 9. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. 10. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

We are here taught:

First, That giving offences is a great sin, and that which we should every one of us avoid, and carefully watch against, *ver. 1, 2*. We can expect no other, but that offences will come, considering the perverseness and frowardness that is in the nature of man, and the wise purpose and counsel of God; which will carry on his work even by those offences, and bring good out of evil. It is almost impossible but that offences will come, and therefore we are concerned to provide accordingly; but wo to him through whom they come, his doom will be heavy, *ver. 2*. more terrible than that of the worst of the malefactors, who are condemned to be thrown into the sea, for they perish under a load of guilt more ponderous than that of millstones.

This speaks a wo, (1.) To persecutors, that offer any injury to the least of Christ's little ones, in word or deed, by which they are discouraged in serving Christ, and doing their duty, or in danger of being driven off from it. (2.) To seducers that corrupt the truths of Christ and his ordinances, and so trouble the minds of the disciples, for they are those by whom offences come. (3.) To those that under the profession of the Christian name live scandalously, and thereby weaken the hands, and sadden the hearts of God's people, for by them the offence comes; and it is no abatement of their guilt, nor will be any of their punishment, that it is impossible but offences will come.

Secondly, That forgiving offences is a great duty, and that which we should every one of us make conscience of, *ver. 3*. Take heed to yourselves. This may refer either to what goes before, or to what follows. Take heed that ye offend not one of these little ones. Ministers must be very careful, not to say or do any thing that may be a discouragement to weak Christians; there is need of great caution, and they ought to speak and act very considerately for fear of this: or, when your brother trespasseth against you, doth you any injury, puts any slight or affront upon you, if he be accessary to any damage done you in your property, or reputation, Take heed to yourselves at such a time, lest you be put into a passion, lest when your spirits are provoked, you speak unadvisedly, and rashly vow revenge, *Prov. xxiv. 29. I will do so to him, as he has done to me*. Take heed what you say at such a time, lest you say amiss.

(1.) If you are permitted to rebuke him, you are advised to do so: smother not the resentment, but give it vent, tell him his faults, shew him wherein he has not done well, nor fairly by you, and it may be you will perceive (and you must be very willing to perceive it) that you mistook him, that it was not a trespass against you, or not designed, but an oversight, and then you will beg his pardon for misunderstanding him, as *Jesh. xxii. 30, 31*.

(2.) You are commanded upon his repentance to forgive him, and to be perfectly reconciled to him: If he repent, forgive him; forget the injury, never think of it again, much less upbraid him with it. Though he do not repent, you must not therefore bear malice to him, or meditate revenge; but if he do not at least say he repents, you are not bound to be so free and familiar with him as you have been. If he be guilty of gross sin, to the offence of the Christian community he is a member of, let him be gravely and mildly reproved for his sin, and upon his repentance received into friendship and communion again. This the apostle calls forgiveness, *2 Cor. ii. 7*.

(3.) You are to repeat this, every time he repeats his trespass, *ver. 4*. If he could be supposed to be either so negligent or so impudent, as to trespass against thee seven times a day, and as often professes himself sorry for his fault, and promiseth not again to offend in like manner, continue to forgive him. *Humanum est errare*. Note, Christians should be of a forgiving spirit, willing to make the best of every body, and all about them easy; forward to extenuate faults, and not to aggravate them, and should contrive as much to shew that they have forgiven an injury, as others to shew that they resent it.

Thirdly, That we have all need to get our faith strengthened, because as that grace grows, all other graces grow. The more firmly we believe the doctrine of Christ, and the more confidently we rely upon the grace of Christ, the better it will be with us every way. Now observe here,

1. The address which the disciples made to Christ for the strengthening of their faith, *ver. 5*. The apostles themselves, so they are here called, though they were prime ministers of state in Christ's kingdom, yet acknowledged the weakness and deficiency of their faith, and saw their need of Christ's grace for the improvement of it; they said unto the Lord, increase our faith, and perfect what is lacking in it. Let the discoveries of faith be more clear, the desires of faith more strong, the dependencies of faith more firm and fixed, the dedications of faith more entire and resolute, and the delights of faith more pleasing. Note, The increase of our faith is what we should earnestly desire, and offer up that desire to God in prayer. Some think they put up this prayer to Christ, upon occasion of his pressing upon them the duty of forgiving injuries; Lord, increase our faith, or we shall never be able to practise such a difficult duty as this. Faith in God's pardoning mercy will enable us to get over the greatest difficulties that lie in the way of our forgiving our brother. Others think it was upon some other occasion, when the apostles were



unaground in working some miracle, and were reprov'd by Christ for the weakness of their faith, as *Matt. xvii. 16.* To him that *blamed* them they must apply themselves for grace to mend them; to him they cry, *Lord, increase our faith.*

2. The assurance Christ gave them of the wonderful efficacy of true faith, *ver. 6.* *If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed,* so small as mustard-seed, but yours is yet less than the least; or so sharp as mustard-seed, so pungent, so exciting to all other graces, is mustard to the animal spirits, and therefore used in palsies, you might do wonders much beyond what you now do; nothing would be too hard for you, that were fit to be done for the glory of God, and the confirmation of the doctrine you preach, yea, though it were the *transplanting of a tree from the earth to the sea,* see *Matt. xvii. 20.* As with God *nothing is impossible,* so are all things possible to him that can believe.

Fourthly, That whatever we do in the service of Christ, we must be very humble, and not imagine that we can merit any favour at his hand, or claim it as a debt, even the apostles themselves, who did so much more for Christ than others, must not think they had thereby made him their debtor.

1. We are all God's servants, his apostles and ministers are in a special manner so, and as servants are bound to do all we can for his honour; our whole strength, and our whole time are to be employed for him; for *we are not our own,* nor at our own dispose, but at our Master's.

2. As God's servants it becomes us to fill up our time with duty, and we have a variety of work appointed us to do, we ought to make the end of one service the beginning of another. The servant that has been *plowing, or feeding cattle in the field,* when he comes home at night, has work to do still, he must wait at table, *ver. 7, 8.* When we have been employed in the duties of a religious conversation, that will not excuse us from the exercises of devotion, when we have been *working for God,* still we must be *waiting on God,* waiting on him continually.

3. Our principal care here must be to do the duty of our religion, and leave it to our Master to give us the comfort of it, when and how he thinks fit. No servant expects that his master should say to him, *Go and sit down to meat,* it is time enough to do that, when we have *done our day's work.* Let us be in care to finish our work, and to do that well, and then the reward will come in due time.

4. It is fit Christ should be first served before us: *Make ready wherewith I may sup, and afterwards they shall eat and drink.* Doubting Christians say, they cannot give to Christ the glory of his love as they should, because they have not yet obtained the comfort of it; but this is wrong, first let Christ have the glory of it, let us attend him with our praises, and then we shall *eat and drink* in the comfort of that love, and in that there is a feast.

5. Christ's servants, when they are to wait upon him, must *gird themselves,* must free themselves from every thing that is entangling and incumbering, and fit themselves with a close application of mind, to go on, and go through with their work; must *gird up the loins of their mind.* When we have prepared for Christ's entertainment, have *made ready wherewith he may sup,* we must then *gird ourselves* to attend him. This is expected from servants, and Christ might require it from us, but he doth not insist upon it: He was *among his disciples, as one that served,* and came not as other masters, to take state, and to be ministered unto, but to minister, witness his washing his disciples feet.

6. Christ's servants do not so much as merit his thanks for any service they do him. *Doth he thank that servant?* Doth he reckon himself indebted to him for it? No, by no means. No good works of ours can merit any thing at the hand of God. We expect God's favour, not because we have by our services made him a debtor to us, but because he has by his promises made himself a debtor to his own honour, and that we may plead with him, but cannot sue for a *quantum meruit.*

7. Whatever we do for Christ, though it should be more, perhaps, than some others do, yet it is no more than is our duty to do. Though we should *do all things that are commanded us,* and alas! in many things we come short of that, yet there is no work of *supererogation,* it is but what we are bound to by that first and great commandment of *loving God with all our heart and soul,* which includes the utmost.

8. The best servants of Christ, even when they do the best services, must humbly acknowledge that they are *unprofitable servants,* though they are not those unprofitable servants that bury their talents, and shall be cast into *utter darkness;* yet as to Christ, and any advantage that can accrue to him by their services, they are *unprofitable;* our *goodness extendeth not unto God,* neither if we are righteous is he the better, *Psal. xvi. 2. Job xxii. 2.* —xxxv. 7. God cannot be a gainer by our services, and therefore cannot be made a debtor by them. He has no need of us, nor can our services make any addition to his perfections, it becomes us therefore to call ourselves *unprofitable servants,* but to call his service a profitable service, for God is happy without us, but we are undone without him.

11. ¶ And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria

and Galilee. 12. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: 13. And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus Master, have mercy on us. 14. And when he saw *them,* he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed. 15. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. 16. And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. 17. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine? 18. There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. 19. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made the whole.

We have here an account of the cure of ten lepers, which we had not in any other of the evangelists. The leprosy was a disease which the Jews supposed to be inflicted for the punishment of some particular sin, and to be, more than other diseases, a mark of God's displeasure, and therefore Christ, who came to take away sin, and turn away wrath, took particular care to cleanse the lepers that fell in his way. Christ was now in his way to Jerusalem, about the mid-way, where he had least acquaintance, in comparison with what he had at Jerusalem, or in Galilee; he was now in the frontier country, the marches that lay between Samaria and Galilee; he went that road to find out these lepers, and to cure them, for he is *found of them that sought him not.* Observe,

First, The address of these lepers to Christ, they were ten in a gang; for though they were shut out from society with others, yet those that were infected were at liberty to converse with one another, which would be some comfort to them, as giving them an opportunity to compare notes, and to condole with one another. Now observe,

1. They met Christ as he entered into a certain village: They did not stay till he had refreshed himself for some time after the fatigue of his journey, but met him as he entered the town, weary as he was, and yet he did not put them off, or adjourn their cause. They stood afar off, knowing that by the law, their disease obliged them to keep their distance. Sense of our spiritual leprosy should make us very humble in all our approaches to Christ: Who are we that we should draw near to him that is intimately pure, who are impure?

2. Their request was unanimous, and very importunate, *ver. 13.* They lifted up *their* voices, being at a distance, and cried, *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.* Those that expect help from Christ, must take him for their Master, and be at his command. If he be Master, he will be Jesus, a Saviour, and not otherwise. They ask not in particular to be cured of their leprosy, but *have mercy on us;* and it is enough to refer ourselves to the compassions of Christ, for they *fail not.* They had heard the fame of this Jesus, though he had not been much conversant in that country, and that was such as encouraged them to make application to him; and if but one of them began in so cheap and easy an address, they would all join.

3. Christ sent them to the priest, to be inspected by him, who was the judge of the leprosy. He did not tell them positively they should be cured, but bid them *go shew themselves to the priests,* *ver. 14.* This was a trial of their obedience, and it was fit it should be so tried, as Naaman's in a like case, *Go wash in Jordan.* Note, Those that expect Christ's favours, must take them in his way and method. Some of these lepers, perhaps, would be ready to quarrel with the prescription, let him either cure, or say he will not, and not send us to the priests on a fool's errand; but over-ruled by the rest, they all *went to the priest.* While the ceremonial law was yet in force, Christ took care it should be observed, and the reputation of it kept up, and due honour paid to the priests in things pertaining to their function; but probably he had here a further design, which was to have the priest's judgment of, and testimony to the perfectness of the cure, and that the priest might be awakened, and others by him, to enquire after one that had such a commanding power over bodily diseases.

4. As they went, they were cleansed, and so became fit to be looked upon by the priest, and to have a certificate from him that they were clean. Observe, Then we may expect God to meet us with mercy, when we are found in the way of duty. If we do what we can, God will not be wanting to do that for us which we cannot. Go, attend upon instituted ordinances, go and pray, and read the scriptures; *Go shew thy self to the priest;* go and open thy case to a faithful minister, and though the means will not heal thee of themselves, God will heal thee in the diligent use of those means.

5. One of them, and but one returned to give thanks, *ver. 15.* When he saw that he was healed, instead of going forward to the priest to be by him declared clean, and so discharged from his confinement, which was all that the rest aimed at, he turned back towards him that was the author of his cure, who he is desirous should have the glory of it, before he received the benefit



of it. He appears to have been very hearty and affectionate in his thanksgivings, *with a loud voice he glorified God*, acknowledging it to come originally from him; and he *lifted up his voice* in his praises, as he had done in his prayers, *ver. 13*. Those that have received mercy from God, should publish it to others, that they may praise God too, and may be encouraged by our experiences to trust in him. But he also made a particular address of thanks to Christ, *ver. 16*. *He fell down at his feet*, put himself into the most humble, reverent posture he could, and *gave him thanks*. Note, We ought to give thanks for the favours Christ bestows upon us, and particularly for recoveries from sickness: And we ought to be *speedy* in our returns of praise, and not to defer them, lest time wear out the sense of the mercy. And it becomes us to be very humble in our thanksgivings, as well as in our prayers. It becomes the seed of Jacob, like him, to own themselves *less than the least of God's mercies*, when they have received them, as well as when they are in pursuit of them.

6. Christ took notice of this one that had thus distinguished himself, for it seems he was a Samaritan, whereas the rest were Jews, *ver. 16*. The Samaritans were separatists from the Jewish church, and had not that pure knowledge and worship of God among them that the Jews had, and yet it was one of them that *glorified God*, when the Jews forgot, or when it was moved to them, *refused* to do it. Now observe here,

1. The particular notice Christ took of him, of the grateful return he made, and the ingratitude of those that were sharers with him in the mercy. That he who was a *stranger* to the common-wealth of Israel, was the only one that *returned to give glory to God*, *ver. 17, 18*. See here, (1.) How *rich* Christ is in *doing good*; *were there not ten cleansed*? Here was a cure by *wholesale*, a whole *hospital* healed with *one word's* speaking. Note, There is an abundance of healing, cleansing virtue in the blood of Christ, sufficient for all his patients, though never so many. Here is *ten at a time* cleansed; we shall have never the less grace for others sharing. (2.) How *poor* we are in our returns, *where is the nine*? Why did not they return to give thanks? This intimates that ingratitude is a very common sin: Of the many that receive mercy from God, there are but few, very few, that *return to give thanks* in a right manner, *scarce one in ten*, who render according to the benefit done unto them. (3.) How those often prove most grateful from whom it was least expected: A Samaritan gives thanks, and a Jew doth not. Thus many who profess revealed religion, are out-done, and quite ashamed, by some that are governed only by natural religion, not only in moral virtue, but in piety and devotion. This serves here to aggravate the ingratitude of those Jews, from whom Christ speaks, as *taking it very ill* that his kindness was so slighted. And it intimates how justly he repents the ingratitude of the world of mankind, for whom he had *done so much*, and from whom he has *received so little*.

2. The great encouragement Christ gave him, *ver. 19*. The rest had their *cure*, and had it not *revoked*, as justly it might have been for their ingratitude, though they had such a good example of gratitude set before them; but he had his cure confirmed particularly with an encomium, *Thy faith hath made thee whole*. The rest were *made whole* by the power of Christ, in compassion to their distress, and in answer to their prayer; but he was made whole *by his faith*, which Christ saw him differenced by from the rest. Note, Temporal mercies are then doubled and sweetened to us, when they are *fetch'd* in by the prayers of faith, and *returned* by the praises of faith.

20. ¶ And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come; he answered them, and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. 21. Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there: for behold, the kingdom of God is within you. 22. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. 23. And they shall say to you, See here, or see there: go not after them, nor follow them. 24. For as the lightning that lighteth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven: so shall also the Son of man be in his day. 25. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. 26. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark: and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: 29. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: 30. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

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31. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. 32. Remember Lot's wife. 33. Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it. 34. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 36. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 37. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

We have here a discourse of Christ's concerning the *kingdom of God*, i. e. the kingdom of the Messiah, which was now shortly to be *set up*, and of which there was great expectation.

1. Here is the demand of the Pharisees concerning it, which occasioned this discourse; they asked *when the kingdom of God should come*: forming a notion of it as a *temporal kingdom*, which should advance the Jewish nation above the nations of the earth; they were impatient to hear some tidings of its approach; they understood, perhaps, that Christ had taught his disciples to pray for the coming of it, and they had long preached that it was *at hand*: Now, say the Pharisees, when will that glorious view open? When shall we see this *long-looked-for* kingdom?

2. Christ's reply to that demand, directed to the Pharisees first, and afterwards to his own disciples, who knew better how to understand it, *ver. 22*. what he said to both, he saith to us.

1. That the kingdom of the Messiah was to be a *spiritual kingdom*, and not temporal and external. They asked *when* it would come: You know not what you ask, saith Christ, it may come, and you not be aware of it: For it has not an *external shew*, as other kingdoms have; the advancements and revolutions of which are taken notice of by the nations of the earth, and fill the news-papers, so they expected this kingdom of God would do: No, saith Christ, (1.) It will have a silent entrance, without pomp, without noise, it *cometh not with observation*, *μετὰ παρατηρήσεως*, with *outward shew*. They desired to have their curiosity satisfied concerning the *time* of it, to which Christ doth not give them any answer, but will have their mistakes rectified concerning the nature of it. *It is not for you to know the times* of this kingdom, those are *secret things*, which belong not to you; but the great intentions of this kingdom, those are *things revealed*. When Messiah the prince comes to set up his kingdom, they shall not say, *Lo here*, or *lo there*, as when a prince goes in progress to visit his territories, it is in every body's mouth, he is here, or he is there; for *where the king is, there is the court*: Christ will not come with all this talk; it will not be set up in this or that particular place; nor will the court of that kingdom be *here* or *there*; nor will it be *here* or *there*, what country men are of, or where they dwell, as if that would place them nearer to, or further from that kingdom. Those who confine Christianity and the church to this place, or that party, cry, *Lo here*, or *lo there*, than which nothing is more contrary to the designs of catholic Christianity; so do they who make prosperity and external pomp a mark of the true church. (2.) It has a *spiritual influence*. *The kingdom of God is within you*. It is not of this world, *John xviii. 36*. its glory doth not strike mens fancies, but affect their spirits, and its power is over their souls and consciences, and from them it receives homage, and not their bodies only. *The kingdom of God* will not change mens outward condition, but their hearts and lives; then it *comes* when it makes those humble and serious, and heavenly, that were proud, vain, and carnal, when it *weans* those from the world that were *wedded* to the world, and therefore look for the kingdom of God in the revolutions of the heart, not of the civil government. The kingdom of God is *among you*, so some read it: You enquire when it will come, and are not aware that it is already begun to be set up *in the midst of you*. The gospel is preached, it is *confirmed* by miracles, it is *embraced* by multitudes, so that it is *in your nation*, though not in your hearts. Note, It is the folly of many curious enquirers concerning the times to come, that they look for that *before them* which is already *among them*.

2. That the setting up of this kingdom was a work that would meet with a great deal of *opposition* and *interruption*, *ver. 22*. The disciples thought they should carry all before them, and expected a constant series of success in their work; but Christ tells them it would be otherwise, *the days will come*, before you have finished your testimony, and done your work, *when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man*, one such a day as we now have, of the prosperity and progress of the gospel, and *shall not see it*. At first, indeed, you will have wonderful success, so they had, when *thousands* were added to the church *in a day*, but do not think it will be always so; no, you will be persecuted and scattered, silenced and imprisoned; so that you will not have opportunities of preaching the gospel without fear, as you now have:



have: people will grow cool to it when they have enjoyed it a while, so that you will not see such harvests of souls gathered into Christ afterwards as at first, nor such multitudes flocking to him as doves to their windows. This looks forward to his disciples in after-ages; they must expect much disappointment; the gospel will not be always preached with like liberty and success. Ministers and churches will sometimes be under *outward restraints*. Teachers will be removed into corners, and solemn assemblies scattered, then they will wish to see such days of opportunity as they have formerly enjoyed, sabbath-days, sacrament-days, preaching-days, praying-days, those are *days of the Son of man*, in which we hear from him, and converse with him; the time may come when we may in vain wish for such days. God teacheth us to know the worth of such mercies by the want of them: it concerns us while they are continued to *improve* them, and in the years of plenty, to lay up in store for the year of famine. Sometimes they will be under *inward restraints*, will not have such tokens of the *presence of the Son of man* with them, as they have sometimes had; the Spirit is withdrawn from them, they see not their signs, the angel comes not down to stir the waters, there is a great stupidity among the children of men, and a great lukewarmness among the children of God; then we would wish to see such *victorious triumphant* days of the *Son of man* as we have sometimes seen, when he has ridden forth with his bow and his crown conquering and to conquer, but we cannot see them. Note, We must not think that Christ's church and cause are lost, because not always alike visible and prevailing.

3. That Christ and his kingdom are not to be looked for in this or that particular place, but his appearance will be general, in all places at once, *ver. 23, 24. They will say to you, see here, or see there*, here is one that will deliver the Jews out of the hands of the oppressing Romans, or there is one that will deliver the Christians out of the hands of the oppressing Jews, here is the Messiah, and there is his prophet: *Here, in this mountain, or there, at Jerusalem*, you will find the true church. *Go not after them, or follow them*, do not heed such suggestions, the kingdom of God was not designed to be the glory of one people only, but to give light to the Gentiles; for as the lightning that lightens out of one part under heaven, shines all on a sudden irresistibly to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

(1.) The judgments that are to destroy the Jewish nation, to lay them waste, and to deliver the Christians from them, shall fly like lightning through the land, shall lay all waste from one end of it to another; and those that are marked for this destruction, can no more avoid it, or oppose it, than they can a flash of lightning. (2.) The gospel that is to set up Christ's kingdom in the world, shall fly like lightning through the nations; the kingdom of the Messiah is not to be a local thing, but is to be disposed far and wide, over the face of the whole earth; it shall shine from Jerusalem to all parts about, and that in a moment; the kingdoms of the earth shall be leavened by the gospel, ere they are aware of it. The trophies of Christ's victories shall be erected on the ruins of the devil's kingdom, even in those countries that could never be subdued to the Roman yoke. The design of the setting up Christ's kingdom, was not to make one nation great, but to make all nations good; some, at least, of all nations, and this point shall be gained, though the nations rage, and the kings of the earth set themselves, with all their might, against it.

4. That the Messiah must suffer before he must reign, *ver. 25. First must he suffer many things*, many hard things, and be rejected of this generation; and if he be thus treated, his disciples must expect no other, but to suffer, and be rejected too, for his sake. They thought of having the kingdom of the Messiah set up in external splendor, no, faith Christ, we must go by the cross to the crown. The Son of man must suffer many things, pain, and shame, and death, are those many things, he must be rejected by this generation of unbelieving Jews, before he be embraced by another generation of believing Gentiles; that his gospel might have the honour of triumphing over the greatest opposition, from those who ought to have given it the greatest assistance; and thus the excellency of the power would appear to be of God, and not of man; for though Israel be not gathered, yet he will be glorious to the ends of the earth.

5. That the setting up the kingdom of the Messiah, would introduce the destruction of the Jewish nation, whom it would find in a deep sleep of security, and drowned in sensuality, as the old world was in the days of Noah, and Sodom in the days of Lot, *ver. 26, &c. Observe*,

1. How it had been with sinners formerly, and what posture the judgments of God, which they had been fairly warned of, did at length find them in. Look as far back as the old world, when all flesh had corrupted their way, and the earth was filled with violence; come a little lower, and think how it was with the men of Sodom, who were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; now observe concerning both these, (1.) That they had fair warning given them, of the ruin that was coming upon them for their sins; Noah was a preacher of righteousness to the old world, so was Lot to the Sodomites, they gave them timely notice, what would be in the end of their wicked ways, and that it was not far off. (2.) That they did not regard the warning given them, and gave no credit, no heed to it; they were very secure, went on in their

business as unconcerned as you would imagine, they did eat, they drank, indulged themselves in their pleasures, and took no care of any thing else, but to make provision for the flesh, counted upon the perpetuity of their present flourishing state, and therefore married wives, and were given in marriage, that their families might be built up; they were all very merry; so were the men of Sodom, and yet very busy too, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. These were lawful things, but the fault was, they minded these inordinately, and their hearts were entirely set upon them, so that they had no heart at all to prepare against the threatened judgments; when they should have been as the men of Nineveh, fasting and praying, repenting and reforming, upon warning given them of an approaching judgment; they were going on securely, eating flesh, and drinking wine, when God calls to weeping and to mourning, *Isa. xxii. 12, 13.* (3.) That they continued in their security and sensuality, till the threatened judgment came, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and Lot went out of Sodom, nothing said or done to them, served to alarm or awaken them. Note, The stupidity of sinners in a sinful way, though it is as strange as it is without excuse, yet we are not to think it strange, for it is not without example. It is the old way that wicked men have trodden, that have gone slumbering to hell, as if their damnation slumbered while they did. (4.) That God took care for the preservation of those that were his, who believed and feared, and took the warning themselves, which they gave to others. Noah entered into the ark, and there he was safe; Lot went out of Sodom, and so went out of harm's way. If some run on heedless and headlong into destruction, that shall be no prejudice to the salvation of them that believe. (5.) That they were surprized with the ruin which they would not fear, and were swallowed up in it, to their unspeakable horror and amazement. The flood came, and destroyed all the sinners of the old world; fire and brimstone came, and destroyed all the sinners of Sodom. God has many arrows in his quiver, and useth which he will, in making war upon his rebellious subjects, for he can make which he will effectual. But that which is especially intended here, is to shew what a dreadful surprize destruction will be to those who are secure and sensual.

2. How it will be with sinners still, *ver. 30. Thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed*, when Christ comes to destroy the Jewish nation by the Roman armies, the generality of that nation, will be found under such a reigning security and stupidity as this. They have warning given by Christ now, and will have it repeated to them, by the apostles after him, as they had by Noah and Lot, but it will be all in vain. They will continue secure, will go on in their neglect and opposition of Christ, and his gospel; till all the Christians are withdrawn from among them, and gone to the place of refuge. God will provide for them on the other side Jordan, and then a deluge of judgments shall flow in upon them, which will destroy all the unbelieving Jews. One would have thought this discourse of our Saviour's, which was publick, and not long after published to the world, should have awakened them, but it did not, for the hearts of that people were hardened to their destruction. And in like manner, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world at the end of time, sinners will be found in the same secure and careless posture, altogether regardless of the judgment approaching, which will therefore come upon them as a snare; and in like manner the sinners of every age, go on securely in their evil ways, and remember not their latter end, nor the account that they must give. Wo to them that are thus at ease in Zion.

6. That it ought to be the care of his disciples and followers, to distinguish themselves from the unbelieving Jews in that day, and leaving them, their city and country, to themselves, to flee at the signal given, according to the direction that should be given, let them retire as Noah to his ark, and Lot to his Zoar. You would have healed Jerusalem, as of old Babylon, but she is not healed, and therefore forsake her, flee out of the midst of her, and deliver every man his soul, *Jer. li. 6, 9.*

(1.) This flight of theirs from Jerusalem must be expeditious, and must not be retarded by any concern about their worldly affairs, *ver. 31. He that shall be on the house-top*, when the alarm is given, let him not come down to take it away; both because he cannot spare so much time, and because the carrying away of his effects, will but incumber him, and retard his flight. Let him not regard his stuff, at such a time, when it will be next to a miracle of mercy, if he have his life given him for a prey. Better leave his stuff behind him, than stay to look after it, and perish with them that believe not. It will be their concern to do as Lot and his family were charged to do; escape for thy life. Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

(2.) When they have made their escape, they must not think of returning, *ver. 32. Remember Lot's wife*; and take warning by her, not only to flee from this Sodom, (for so Jerusalem is become, *Isa. i. 10.*) but to persevere in your flight, and do not look back as she did; be not loth to leave a place marked for destruction, whoever, or whatever, you leave behind you, that is ever so dear to you. Those who have left the Sodom of a natural state, let them go forward, and not so much as look a kind look towards it again. Let them not look back, lest they should be tempted to go back; nay, lest that be construed a going back in heart.



heart, or an evidence that the heart was left behind. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, that she might remain a lasting monument of God's displeasure against apostates, that *begin in the spirit and end in the flesh*.

(3.) There would be no other way of saving their lives but by quitting the Jews, and if they thought to save themselves by a coalition with them, they would find themselves mistaken, *ver. 31. Whosoever shall seek to save his life, by declining from his Christianity, and complying with the Jews, he shall lose it with them, and perish in the common calamity; but whosoever is willing to venture his life with the Christians, upon the same bottom on which they venture, to take his lot with them in life and in death, he shall preserve his life, for he shall make sure eternal life; and is in a likelier way at that time to save his life than those who embark in a Jewish bottom, or insure upon their securities. Note, Those do best for themselves that trust God in the way of duty.*

7. That all good Christians should certainly escape, but many of them very narrowly, from that destruction, *ver. 34, 35, 36.* When God's judgments are laying all waste, he will take an effectual course to preserve those that are his, by remarkable providences distinguishing between them and others, that were nearest to them; *two in a bed, one taken and the other left; one snatched out of the burning, and taken into a place of safety, while the other is left to perish in the common ruin. Note, Though the sword devours one as well as another, and all things seem to come alike to all; yet, sooner or later, it shall be made to appear that the Lord knows them that are his, and are not, and how to take out the precious from the vile. We are sure the judge of all the earth will do right; and therefore when he sends a judgment on purpose to avenge the death of his son, upon those that crucified him, he will take care that none of those who glorified him, and gloried in his cross, shall be taken away by that judgment.*

Lastly, That this distinguishing, dividing, discriminating work shall be done in all places, as far as the kingdom of God shall extend, *ver. 37. Where, Lord?* They had enquired concerning the time, and he would not gratify their curiosity with any information concerning that, they therefore tried him with another question, *Where, Lord?* Where shall those be safe that are taken? Where shall those perish that are left? The answer is proverbial, and may be explained so as to answer each side of the question, *Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.*

(1.) Wherever the wicked are that are marked for perdition, they shall be found out by the judgments of God; as wherever a dead carcase is, the birds of prey will smell it out, and make a prey of it. The Jews having made themselves a dead and putrefied carcase, odious to God's holiness, and obnoxious to his justice, wherever any of that unbelieving generation is, the judgments of God shall fasten upon them, as the eagles do upon the prey, *Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, Psal. xxi. 9. though they set their nests among the stars, Obad. 4.* The Roman soldiers will hunt the Jews out of all their recesses and fastnesses, and none shall escape. (2.) Wherever the godly are, that are marked for preservation, they shall be found happy in the enjoyment of Christ. As the dissolution of the Jewish church shall be extended to all parts, so shall the constitution of the Christian church: Wherever Christ is, believers will flock to him, and meet in him, as eagles about the prey, without being directed or shewed the way, by the instinct of the new nature. Now Christ is where his gospel, and his ordinances, and church are, *For where two or three are gathered in his name, there is he in the midst of them, and thither therefore others will be gathered to him. The kingdom of the Messiah is not to have one particular place for its metropolis, such as Jerusalem was to the Jewish church, to which all Jews were to resort: But wherever the body is, wherever the gospel is preached, and ordinances are ministered, thither will pious souls resort, there they will find Christ, and, by faith, feast upon him. Wherever Christ records his name, he will meet his people and bless them, John iv. 21. 1 Tim. ii. 8.* Many good interpreters understand it, of the gathering of the saints together to Christ in the kingdom of glory; ask not where the carcase will be, and how they shall find the way to it, for they shall be under an infallible conduct, to him whom is their living, quickening head, and the center of their unity; to him shall the gathering of the people be.

## C H A P. XVIII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The parable of the importunate widow, designed to teach us fervency in prayer, *ver. 1—8.* (2.) The parable of the Pharisee and publican, designed to teach us humility, and humiliation for sin in prayer, *ver. 9—14.* (3.) Christ's favour to little children that were brought to him, *ver. 15—17.* (4.) The trial of a rich man that had a mind to follow Christ, whether he loved better, Christ, or his riches, his coming short upon that trial, and Christ's discourse with his disciples upon that occasion, *ver. 18—30.* (5.) Christ's foretelling of his own death and sufferings, *ver. 31—34.* (6.) His restoring sight to a blind man, *ver. 35—43.* And these four passages we had before in Matthew and Mark.

1. **A**ND he spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; 2. Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man. 3. And there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5. Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

This parable has its key hanging at the door; the drift and design of it is *prefixed*; Christ spoke it with this intent, to teach us that *men ought always to pray, and not to faint*, *ver. 1.* (1.) It supposeth that all God's people are praying people, all God's children keep up both a constant and an occasional correspondence with him; send to him *statedly*, and upon every emergency. It is our privilege and honour, that we may pray, it is our duty; we ought to pray, we sin if we neglect it. It is to be our constant work, we ought always to pray, it is that which the duty of every day requires; we must pray and never grow weary of praying, nor think of giving it off, till it comes to be swallowed up in everlasting praise. But that which seems particularly designed here, is to teach us constancy and perseverance in our request, for some spiritual mercies that we are in pursuit of, relating either to ourselves, or to the church of God; when we are praying for strength against our spiritual enemies, or lusts and corruptions, which are our worst enemies; we must continue instant in prayer, must pray and not faint, for we shall not seek God's face in vain. So we must likewise in our prayers for the deliverance of the people of God, out of the hands of their persecutors and oppressors.

First, Christ shews, by a parable, the power of importunity among men, who will be swayed by that, when nothing else will influence, to do that which is just and right. He gives you an instance of an honest cause, that was carried before an unjust judge, not by the equity or compassionableness of it, but purely by dint of importunity. Observe here,

1. The ill character of the judge that was in a certain city, he neither feared God, nor regarded man, i. e. he had no manner of concern, either for his conscience, or for his reputation; he stood in no awe, either of the wrath of God against him, or of the censures of men concerning him. Or he took no care to do his duty either to God or man. He was a perfect stranger both to godliness and honour, and had no notion of either. Those that have cast off the fear of their Creator, it is not strange if they be altogether regardless of their fellow creatures; where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. Such a prevalency of irreligion and inhumanity is bad in any, but very bad in a judge that has power in his hand, in the use of which he ought to be guided by the principles of religion and justice, and if he be not, instead of doing good with his power, he will be in danger of doing hurt. Wickedness in the place of judgment, was one of the worst evils Solomon saw under the sun, *Ecc. iii. 16.*

2. The distressed case of a poor widow that was necessitated to make her appeal to him, being wronged by some one that thought to bear her down with power and terror; she had, manifestly, right on her side; but it should seem, in soliciting, to have right done her, she tied not herself to the formalities of the law, but made personal application to the judge from day to day at his own house, still crying, *Avenge me of mine adversary*, that is, *do me justice against mine adversary*; not that she desired to be revenged on him for any thing he had done against her, but that he might be obliged to restore what effects he had of her's in his hands, and might be disabled any more to oppress her. Note, Poor widows have often many adversaries, who barbarously take advantage of their weak and helpless state, to invade their rights, and defraud them of what little they have; and magistrates are particularly charged, not only not to do violence to the widow, *Jer. xxii. 3.* but to judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow, *Isa. i. 17.* to be their patrons and protectors; then they are as gods, for God is so, *Psal. lxxviii. 5.*

3. The difficulty and discouragement she met with in her cause; He would not for a while, according to his usual practice he frowned upon her, took no notice of her cause, but connived at all the wrong her adversary did her, for she had no bribe to give him, no great man, whom he stood in any awe of, to speak for her, so that he did not at all incline to redress her grievances; and he himself was conscious of the reason of his dilatoriness, and could not but own within himself, that he neither feared God, nor regarded man; it is sad, a man should know so much amiss by himself, and be in no care to amend it.

4. The



4. The gaining of her point by continual *dunning* of this unjust judge, ver. 5. *because this widow troubles me*, gives me a continual toil, I will hear her cause, and do her justice, not so much, left by her clamour against me, she bring me into an ill name, as left by her clamour to me she weary me; for she is resolved she will give me no rest till it is done, and therefore I will do it, to save myself further trouble; as good at first as at last. Thus she got justice done her by continual craving; she begged it at his door, followed him in the streets, solicited him in open court, and still her cry was, *Avenge me of mine adversary*, which he was forced to do, to get rid of her; for his conscience, as bad as he was, would not suffer him to send her to prison for an affront upon the court.

Secondly, He applies this for the encouragement of God's praying people, to pray with faith and fervency, and to persevere therein.

1. He assures them, that God will at length be gracious to them, ver. 7. *Hear what the unjust judge saith*; how he owns himself quite overcome by a constant importunity, and from thence infers, *Shall not God avenge his own elect*? Observe,

(1.) What is it that they desire and expect, that God would *avenge his own elect*. Note, 1. There is a people in the world that are God's people, his *elect*, his *own elect*, a choice people, a chosen people. And this he has an eye to in all he doth for them, it is because they are his *chosen*, and in pursuance of the choice he has made of them. 2. God's own elect meet with a great deal of trouble and opposition in this world, there are *many adversaries* that fight against them; Satan is their great adversary.

3. That which is wanted and waited for, is God's preserving and protecting them, and the work of his own hands in them; his securing the interest of the church in the world, and of his grace in the heart.

(2.) What is it that is required of God's people, in order to the obtaining of this; they must *cry day and night to him*, not that he needs their remonstrances, or can be moved by their pleadings, but this he has made their duty, and to this he has promised mercy. We ought to be particular in praying against our spiritual enemies, as St. Paul was, *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me*, like this importunate widow. Lord, mortify *this* corruption, Lord, arm me against *this* temptation. We ought to concern ourselves for the persecuted and oppressed churches, and to pray that God would do them justice, and set them in safety. And herein we must be very urgent, we must *cry* with earnestness; we must *cry day and night*, as those that believe prayer will be heard at last; we must *wrestle with God*, as those that know how to value the blessing, and will have no nay. God's praying people are bid to *give him no rest*, Isa. lxii. 6, 7.

(3.) What discouragements they may perhaps meet with in their prayers and expectations; he may *bear long with them*, and may not presently appear for them, in answer to their prayers. He is *μακροθυμῶν ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους*: He *exerciseth patience towards the adversaries of his people*, and doth not take vengeance on them; and he *exerciseth the patience of his people*, and doth not plead for them: He *bore long with the cry of the sin* of the Egyptians that oppressed Israel, and with the *cry of the sorrows* of those that were oppressed.

(4.) What assurance they have that mercy will come at last though it be delayed, and how it is supported by what the unjust judge saith, if this widow prevail by being importunate, much more shall God's elect prevail. For, (1.) This widow was a *stranger*, nothing related to the judge, but God's praying people are his own elect, whom he knows, and loves, and delights in, and has always concerned himself for. (2.) She was but *one*, but the praying people of God are *many*, that all come to him on the same errand, and agree to ask what they need, Matt. xviii. 19. As the saints of heaven surround the throne of glory with united praises, so saints on earth besiege the throne of grace with their united prayers. (3.) She came to a *judge* that bid her *keep her distance*, we come to a *Father* that bids us *come boldly* to him, and teaches us to cry *Abba, Father*. (4.) She came to an *unjust judge*, we come to a *righteous Father*, John xvii. 25. one that regards his own glory, and the comforts of his poor creatures especially those in distress, as *widows and fatherless*. (5.) She came to this judge purely upon her own account; but God is himself engaged in the cause which we are soliciting; and we can say, *Arise, O Lord, plead thine own cause*; and *what wilt thou do to thy great name*? (6.) She had no friend to speak for her, to add force to her petition, and to use interest for her more than her own; but we have an *advocate with the Father*, his own Son, who *ever lives to make intercession* for us, and has a powerful prevailing interest in heaven. (7.) She had no promise of speeding, no, nor any encouragement given her to ask; but we have the golden sceptre held out to us, are bid to ask, and it is promised it shall be given us. (8.) She could have access to the judge, only at some certain times; but we may cry to God *day and night*, at all hours, and therefore may the rather hope to prevail by importunity. (9.) Her importunity was provoking to the judge, and she might fear lest it should set him more against her; but our importunity is pleasing to God; the prayer of the

upright is *his delight*, and therefore we may hope shall avail much, if it be an effectual fervent prayer.

2. He intimates to them, that notwithstanding this, they will begin to be weary of waiting for him, ver. 8. *Nevertheless*, though such assurances are given, that God will avenge his own elect, yet *when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth*? The Son of man will come to *avenge his own elect*, to plead the cause of persecuted Christians against the persecuting Jews; he will come in his providence to plead the cause of his injured people in every age, and at the great day he will come finally to determine the controversies of Zion. Now when he comes, will he find faith in the earth? The question implies a strong negation, no, he shall not; he himself foresees it. (1.) This supposeth that it is *on earth* only, that there is occasion for *faith*: For sinners in hell are *feeling* that which they would not believe, and saints in heaven are *enjoying* that which they did believe. (2.) It supposeth that *faith* is the great thing, that Jesus Christ *looks for*. He *looks down* upon the children of men, and doth not ask, is there innocency? but *is there faith*? He enquired concerning the faith of those who applied themselves to him for cures. (3.) It supposeth that if there were faith, though never so little, he would discover it, and *find it out*. The weakest believer, and most obscure, his eye is upon. (4.) It is foretold, that when Christ comes to plead his peoples cause, he will find but *little faith* in comparison with what one might expect. That is,

1. In general, he will find but *few good people*, few that are really and truly good. Many that have the form and fashion of godliness, but few that have faith, that are sincere and honest: nay, he will find little *fidelity* among men, the *faithful fail*, Psal. xii. 1, 2. Even to the end of time there will still be occasion for the same complaint; the world will grow no better, no, not when it is drawing towards its period. Bad it is, and bad it will be, and worst of all just before Christ's coming; the last times will be the most perilous.

2. In particular, he will find few that have *faith* concerning his coming. When he comes to *avenge his own elect*, he looks if there be any faith *to help*, and *to uphold*, and wonders that there is none, Isa. lix. 16.—lxiii. 5. It intimates that Christ, both in his particular comings for the relief of his people, and in his general coming at the end of time, may, and will delay his coming so long as that, (1.) Wicked people will begin to *defy it*, and to say, *Where is the promise of his coming*? 2 Pet. iii. 4. They will challenge him to come, Isa. v. 10. Amos v. 19. and his delay will harden them in their wickedness, Matt. xxiv. 48. (2.) Even his own people will begin to *despair* of it, and to conclude he will never come, because he has passed their reckoning. God's time to appear for his people is, when things are brought to the last extremity, and when Sion begins to say, *The Lord has forsaken me*. See Isa. xlix 14.—xl. 27. But this is our comfort, that when the time appointed comes, it will appear that the unbelief of man has not made the promise of God of none effect.

9. And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11. The Pharisee stood and prayed this with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13. And the publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

The scope of this parable likewise is prefixed to it, and we are told, ver. 9. who they were that it was levelled at, and for whom it was calculated: He designed it for the conviction of some who *trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and despised others*. They were such as had, (1.) A great *conceit of themselves*, and of their own goodness; they thought themselves as holy as they needed to be, and holier than all their neighbours, and such as might serve for examples to them all. But that was not all, (2.) They had a *confidence in themselves* before God; and not only had a high opinion of their own righteousness, but depended upon the merit of it, whenever they addressed to God, as their plea; they *trusted in themselves, as being righteous*; they thought they had made God their debtor, and might demand any thing from him: And, (3.) They despised others, and looked upon them with contempt, as not worthy to be compared with them. Now Christ by this parable would shew such their folly, and that thereby they shut themselves out from acceptance with God. This is called a *parable*, though there be nothing of similitude in it; but is rather a description of the different temper and language



guage of those that *proudly justify themselves*, and those that *hum- bly condemn themselves*; and their different standing before God. It is matter of fact every day.

First, Here are both these addressing themselves to the duty of prayer, at the same place and time, *ver. 10. Two men went up into the temple* (for the temple stood upon a hill) *to pray*. It was not the hour of publick prayer, but they went thither to offer up their personal devotions, as was usual with good people at that time, when the temple was not only the *place*, but the *medium* of worship, and God has promised in answer to Solomon's request, that whatever prayer was made in a right manner, *in or towards* that house, it should *therefore* the rather be accepted. Christ is our temple, and to him we must have an eye in all our approaches to God. The *Pharisee* and the *publican* both went to *the temple to pray*. Note, Among the worshippers of God, in the visible church, there is a mixture of good and bad; of some that are accepted of God, and some that are not; and so it has been ever since Cain and Abel brought their offering to the same altar. The Pharisee, as proud as he was, could not think himself above prayer: Nor could the publican, as humble as he was, think himself shut out from the benefit of it; but we have reason to think these went with different views.

1. The Pharisee went to *the temple* to pray, because it was a *publick* place, more publick than the corners of the streets, and therefore he should have many eyes upon him, who would applaud his devotion, which perhaps was more than was expected. The character Christ gave of the Pharisees, that *all their works they did to be seen of men*, gives us occasion for this suspicion. Note, Hypocrites keep up the external performances of religion, only to *save or gain credit*. There are many we see every day at the temple, whom it is to be feared we shall not see in the great day at Christ's right hand.

2. The publican went to the temple, because it was appointed to be a *house of prayer* for all people, *Isa. lvi. 7*. The Pharisee came to the temple upon a *compliment*, the publican upon business; the Pharisee to make his appearance, the publican to make his request. Now God sees with what disposition and design we come to wait upon him in holy ordinances, and will judge of us accordingly.

Secondly, Here is the Pharisee's address to God, (for a prayer I cannot call it) he *stood and prayed thus with himself, ver. 11, 12. standing by himself he prayed thus*, so some read it; he was wholly intent upon himself, had nothing in his eye but *self*, his own praise, and not God's glory; Or standing in some conspicuous place, where he distinguished himself; or *setting himself* in print with a great deal of state and formality, he prayed thus. Now that which he is here supposed to say is, that which shews,

1. That he *trusted to himself that he was righteous*. A great many good things he saith of himself, which we will suppose to be true, that he was free from gross and scandalous sins: He was not an *extortioner*, not an usurer, not oppressive to debtors or tenants, but fair and kind to all that had dependence upon him: he was not *unjust* in any of his dealings; did no man any wrong: he could say as Samuel, *whose ox or whose ass have I taken?* He was *no adulterer*, but had possessed his vessel in sanctification and honour. Yet this was not all, he *fasted twice in the week*, partly as an act of temperance, partly of devotion: the Pharisees and their disciples fasted twice a week, Monday and Thursday; thus he glorified God with his body: yet that was not all, he *gave tithes of all that he possessed*, according to the law, and so glorified God with his worldly estate: now all this was very well and commendable. Miserable is the condition of those who come short of the righteousness of this Pharisee, and yet he was not accepted, and why was he not? (1.) His giving God thanks for this, though in itself a good thing, yet seems to be a meer formality: He doth not say, *by the grace of God I am that I am*, as Paul did, but turns it off with a slight, *God, I thank thee*, which is intended but for a plausible introduction to a proud vainglorious ostentation of himself. (2.) He makes his boast of this, and dwells with delight upon this subject, as if all his business to the temple was to tell God almighty how very good he was; and he is ready to say with those hypocrites that we read of, *Isa. lviii. 3. Wherefore have we fasted say they, and thou seest not?* (3.) He *trusted* to it as a righteousness, and not only mentions it, but pleaded it, as if hereby he had merited at the hands of God, and made him his debtor. (4.) Here is not one word of prayer in all he saith: He went up to the temple to pray, but forgot his errand, was so full of himself and his own goodness, that he thought he had need of nothing, no, not of the favour and grace of God, which, it should seem, he did not think worth asking.

2. That he *despised others*. (1.) He thought meanly of all mankind but himself, *I thank thee that I am not as other men are*. He speaks indefinitely, as if he were better than any. We may have reason to thank God that we are not as *some men* are, that are notoriously wicked and vile; but to speak at random thus, as if we only were good, and all beside us were reprobates, is to judge by wholesale. (2.) He thought meanly in a particular manner of this publican, whom he had left behind, it is probable, in the court of the Gentiles, and whose company he had fallen into as he came to the temple. He knew he was a publican and therefore very uncharitably concluded that he was an ex-

tortioner, unjust, and all that is naught. Suppose it had been so, and he had known it, what business had he to take notice of it? Could not he say his prayers (and that was all the Pharisees did) without reproaching his neighbours? Or was this a part of his God, *I thank thee?* And was he as much pleased with the publican's badness, as with his own goodness? There could not be a plainer evidence not only of the want of humility and charity, but of reigning pride and malice, than this was.

Thirdly, Here is the publican's address to God, which was the reverse of the Pharisee's, as full of *humility* and *humiliation* as his was of *pride* and *ostentation*; and of *repentance* for sin, and *desire* towards God, as his was of *confidence* in himself, and his own righteousness and sufficiency.

1. He expressed his repentance and humility in *what he did*; and his gesture when he addressed himself to his devotions, was *expressive* of great seriousness and humility, and the proper clothing of a broken, penitent, and obedient heart. (1.) He *stood afar off*. The Pharisee *stood*, but crowded up as high as he could to the upper end of the court, the publican in a sense of his unworthiness to draw near to God, *kept at a distance*, and perhaps for fear of offending the Pharisee, whom he observed to look scornfully upon him, and of disturbing his devotions. Hereby he owned, that God might justly *behold him afar off*, and send him into a state of eternal distance from him, and that it was a great favour that God was pleased to admit him *thus nigh*. (2.) He *would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven*, much less his hands, as was usual in prayer. He did *lift up his heart* to God in the heavens, in *holy desires*, but through prevailing shame and humiliation, he did not lift up his eyes in *holy confidence* and *courage*. His iniquities are gone over his head, as a heavy burthen, so that he is not able to look up, *Psal. xl. 12*. The dejection of his looks is an indication of the dejection of his mind, at the thought of sin. (3.) He *smote upon his breast*, in a holy indignation at himself for sin: Thus would I smite this wicked heart of mine, the poisoned fountain out of which flow all the streams of sin, if I could come at it. The sinner's heart first smites him in a penitent rebuke, *2 Sam. xxiv. 10*. David's heart *smote him*, sinner, what hast thou done? and then he smites his heart with penitent remorse, *O wretched man that I am!* Ephraim is said to *smite upon his thigh*, *Jer. xxxi. 19*. Great mourners are represented *tabring upon their breasts*, *Nah. ii. 7*.

2. He expressed it in *what he said*: His prayer was short; fear and shame hindered him from saying much; sighs and groans swallowed up his words; but what he said was to the purpose, *God, be merciful to me a sinner!* And blessed be God that we have this prayer upon record, as an answered prayer, and that we are sure he that prayed it went to his house justified; and so shall we if we pray it as he did, through Jesus Christ; *God, be merciful to me a sinner*; the God of infinite mercy be merciful to me, for if he be not, I am for ever undone, for ever miserable. God be merciful to me, for I have been cruel to myself. (1.) He owns himself a *sinner* by nature, by practice, guilty before God; *behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee*. The Pharisee denies himself to be a *sinner*, none of his neighbours can charge him, and he sees no reason to charge himself with any thing amiss; *he is clean, he is pure from sin*; but the publican gives himself no other character but that of a *sinner*, a convicted criminal at God's bar. (2.) He has no dependence but upon the *mercy of God*, that, and that only, he relies upon. The Pharisee had insisted upon the *merit* of his fastings and tithes, but the poor publican disclaims all thought of merit, and flies to mercy, as his city of refuge, and takes hold of the horn of that altar. Justice condemns me, nothing will save me but mercy, mercy. (3.) He earnestly prays for the benefit of that mercy, *O God, be merciful, be propitious to me*; forgive my sins, be reconciled to me; take me into thy favour; receive me graciously; love me freely. He comes as a beggar for an alms, when he is ready to perish for hunger. Probably he repeated this prayer with renewed affections, and perhaps said more to the same purpose; made a particular confession of his sins, and mentioned the particular mercies he wanted, and waited upon God for, but still this was the burthen of the song, *God, be merciful to me a sinner*.

Fourthly, Here is the publican's acceptance with God: We have seen how differently these two addressed themselves to God, it is now worth while to enquire how they speed. There were those who would cry up the Pharisee, and by whom he would go to his house applauded, and who would look with contempt upon this sneaking whining publican: But our Lord Jesus, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid, who is perfectly acquainted with all proceedings in the court of heaven, assures us, that this poor penitent broken-hearted publican went to his house justified, *rather than the other*. The Pharisee thought if one of them two must be justified, and not the other, certainly it must be he, rather than the publican: No, saith Christ, *I tell you*, I affirm it with the utmost assurance, and declare it to you with the utmost concern, *I tell you*, it is the publican rather than the Pharisee. The proud Pharisee goes away rejected of God, his thanksgivings are so far from being accepted, that they are an *abomination*: He is *not justified*, his sins are not pardoned, nor is he delivered from condemnation: He is not accepted as righteous in God's sight, because



because he is so righteous in his own sight; but the publican, upon this humble address to heaven, obtains the remission of his sins; and he whom the Pharisee would not set with the dogs of his flock, God sets with the children of his family.

And the reason given for this is, because God's glory is to resist the proud, and give grace to the humble. (1.) Proud men that exalt themselves, are rivals with God, and therefore they shall certainly be abased. God, in his discourse with Job, appeals to this proof, that he is God, that he looks upon every one that is proud, and brings him low, Job xl. 12. (2.) Humble men that abase themselves, are subjects to God, and they shall be exalted: God has preferment in store, for those that will take it as a favour, not for those that demand it as a debt. He shall be exalted into the love of God, and communion with him; shall be exalted into a satisfaction in himself, and exalted at last as high as heaven. See how the punishment answers the sin, *He that exalteth himself shall be abased*; see how the recompence answers the duty, *He that humbles himself shall be exalted*. See also the power of God's grace, in bringing good out of evil; the publican had been a great sinner, and out of the greatness of his sin was brought the greatness of his repentance; out of the eater came forth meat; and, on the contrary, the power of Satan's malice in bringing evil out of good. It was good that the Pharisee was no extortioner or unjust; but the devil made him proud of this to his ruin.

15. And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. 17. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.

This passage of story we had both in Matthew and Mark, it very fitly follows here after the story of the publican, as a confirmation of the truth which was to be illustrated by that parable, that those shall be accepted with God and honoured, who humble themselves, and for them Christ has blessings in store, the choicest and best of blessings. Observe here,

1. That those who are themselves blessed in Christ, should desire to have their children also blessed in him, and should hereby testify the true honour they have for Christ, by their making use of him, and the true love they have for their children by their concern about their souls. They brought to him infants very young, not able to go, sucking children, as some think. None too little, too young, to bring to Christ, who knows how to shew kindness to them, that are not capable of doing service to him.

2. One gracious touch of Christ's will make our children happy: They brought infants to him, that he might touch them, in token of the application of his grace and Spirit to them, for that always makes way for his blessing, which likewise they expected, see Isa. xlv. 3. *I will first pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and then my blessing upon thine offspring.*

3. It is no strange thing for those that make their application to Jesus Christ for themselves, or for their children, to meet with discouragement, even from those that should countenance and encourage them. When the disciples saw it, they thought if this were admitted, it would bring an endless trouble upon their Master, and therefore they rebuked them, and frowned upon them. The spouse complained of the watchmen, Cant. iii. 3.—v. 7.

4. Many whom the disciples rebuke, the Master invites. Jesus called them unto him, when upon the disciples check they were retiring. They did not appeal from the disciples to the Master, but the Master took cognizance of their despised cause.

5. It is the mind of Christ, that little children should be brought to him, and presented as living sacrifices to his honour. Suffer little children to come to me, and forbid them not; let nothing be done to hinder them, for they shall be as welcome as any. The promise is to us, and to our seed, and therefore he that has the dispensing of promised blessings, will bid them welcome to him with us.

6. The children of those that belong to the kingdom of God, do likewise belong to that kingdom, as the children of freemen are freemen. If the parents be members of the visible church, the children are so too, for if the root be holy, the branches are so.

7. So welcome are children to Christ, that those grown people are most welcome to him that have in them most of the disposition of children, ver. 17. *Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child*, that is, receive the benefits of it with humility and thankfulness, not pretending to merit them, as the Pharisee did, but gladly owning himself indebted to free grace for them, as the publican did, unless a man be brought to this self-denying frame, he shall in no wise enter into that kingdom. They must receive the kingdom of God as children, receive their estates by descent and inheritance, not by purchase, and call it their Father's gift.

18. And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 19. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, that is God. 20. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. 21. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. 22. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. 23. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. 24. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25. For it is easier for a camel to go through a needles eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26. And they that heard it, said, Who then can be saved? 27. And he said, The things which are impossible with men, are possible with God. 28. Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. 29. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children for the kingdom of Gods sake, 30. Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

In these verses we have,

First, Christ's discourse with a ruler, that had a good mind to be directed by him in the way to heaven. In which we may observe,

1. It is a blessed sight to see persons of distinction in the world, distinguish themselves from others of their rank, by their concern about their souls and another life. Luke takes notice of it, that he was a ruler; few of the rulers had any esteem for Christ, but here was one that had, whether a church or state-ruler, doth not appear, but he was one in authority.

2. The great thing we are every one of us concerned to enquire after, is, what we shall do to get to heaven; *What we shall do to inherit eternal life?* which implies such a belief of an eternal life after this, as atheists and infidels have not; such a concern to make it sure, as a careless unthinking world have not, and such a willingness to comply with any terms that it may be made sure, as those have not that are resolutely devoted to the world and the flesh.

3. Those that would inherit eternal life, must apply themselves to Jesus Christ as their Master, their teaching master, so it signifies here (*διδασκαλε*) and their ruling master here, and so they shall for certain find him. There is no learning the way to heaven but in the school of Christ, by those that enter themselves into it, and stick to it.

4. Those that come to Christ as their master, must believe him to have not only a divine mission, but a divine goodness. Christ would have this ruler know, that if he understood himself aright in calling him good, he did in effect call him God, and indeed he was so, ver. 19. *Why callest thou me good?* thou knowest there is none good but one, that is God, and dost thou then take me for God? if so, thou art in the right.

5. Our Master, Christ himself, has not altered the way to heaven from what it was before his coming, but only has made it more plain and easy, and comfortable, and provided for our relief, in case we take any false step. *Thou knowest the commandments*; Christ came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to establish them. Wouldest thou inherit eternal life? govern thy self by the commandments.

6. The duties of the second table must be conscientiously observed, in order to our happiness, and we must not think that any acts of devotion, how plausible soever, will atone for the neglect of them. Nor is it enough to keep ourselves free from the gross violations of these commandments, but we must know these commandments, as Christ has explained them in his sermon upon the mount, in their extent and spiritual nature, and so observe them.

7. Men think themselves innocent, because they are ignorant, so this ruler did: He said, *All these have I kept from my youth up*, ver. 21. He knows no more evil by himself, than the Pharisee did, ver. 11. He boasts that he began early in a course of virtue; that he had continued in it to this day, and that he had not in any instance transgressed. Had he been acquainted with the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law, and with the workings of his own heart, had he been but Christ's disciple a while, and learned of him, he would have said the quite contrary; *All these have I broken from my youth up*, in thought, word, and deed.

8. The great things by which we are to try our spiritual state are, how we stand affected to Christ and to our brethren,



to this world, and to the other; by these this man was tried: For, (1.) if he have a true *affection to Christ*, he will *come and follow him*, will attend to his doctrine, and submit to his discipline, whatever it cost him. None shall inherit eternal life, who are not willing to take their lot with the Lord Jesus, to follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes. (2.) If he have a true *affection to his brethren*, he will, as there is occasion, *distribute to the poor*, who are God's receivers of his dues, out of our estates. (3.) If he think meanly of *this world*, as he ought, he will not stick at *selling what he has*, if there be a necessity for it, for the relief of God's poor. (4.) If he think highly of the other world, as he ought, he will desire no more but to have *treasure in heaven*, and will reckon that a sufficient, abundant recompence for all that he has left or lost, or laid out for God in this world.

9. There are many that have a great deal in them that is very commendable, and yet they perish *for lack of some one thing*, so this ruler here, he broke with Christ upon this, he liked all his terms very well, but this which would part between him and his estate: In this, I pray thee, have me excused. If this be the bargain, it is no bargain.

10. Many that are loth to leave Christ, yet do leave him. After a long struggle between their convictions and their corruptions, their corruptions carry the day at last; they are very sorry they cannot serve God and mammon both, but if one must be quitted, it shall be their God, not their worldly gain.

Secondly, Christ's discourse with his disciples upon this occasion: In which we may observe,

1. That riches are a great hindrance to many, in the way to heaven. Christ took notice of the reluctancy and regret with which the rich man broke off from him, he *saw that he was very sorrowful*, and was sorry for him; but from thence he infers, *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?* ver. 24. If this ruler had had but as little of the world as Peter, and James, and John had, in all probability he would have left it to follow Christ as they did; but having a great estate, it had a great influence upon him, and he chose rather to take his leave of Christ, than to lay himself under an obligation to dispose of his estate in charitable uses. Christ asserts the difficulty of the salvation of rich people very emphatically, ver. 25. *It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* It is a proverbial expression, that speaks the thing extremely difficult.

2. That such a general affection there is in the hearts of all people to this world, and the things of it, that since Christ has required it as necessary to salvation, that we should sit loose to this world, it is really very hard for any to get to heaven: If we must *sell all*, or break with Christ, *who then can be saved?* ver. 26. They do not find fault with what Christ required, as hard and unreasonable: No, it is very fit, that they who expect an eternal happiness in the other world, should be willing to forego all that is dear to them in this world, in expectation of it. But they know how closely the hearts of the most of men cleave to this world, and are ready to despair of their being ever brought to this.

3. That there are such difficulties in the way of our salvation as could never be got over but by pure omnipotence, by that grace of God which is almighty, and to which that is *possible*, which exceeds all created power and wisdom. The *things which are impossible with men*, and utterly impossible it is that men should work such a change upon their own spirits as to turn them from the world to God, it is like *dividing the sea*, and *driving Jordan back*, these things are *possible with God*: His grace can work upon the soul, so as to alter the bent and bias of it, and give it a contrary ply; and it is he that works in us *both to will and to do*.

4. That there is an aptness in us to speak too much of what we have left and lost, of what we have done and suffered for Christ. This appears in Peter, ver. 28. *Lo, we have left all and followed thee*; when it came in his way, he could not forbear magnifying his own and his brethrens affection to Christ, in *quitting all to follow him*. But this we should be so far from boasting of, that we should rather acknowledge it not worth taking notice of, and be ashamed of ourselves that there has been any regret and difficulty in the doing of it, and any hankering towards those things afterwards.

5. That whatever we have left or laid out for Christ, it shall, without fail, be abundantly made up to us in this world, and that to come, notwithstanding our weaknesses and infirmities, ver. 29, 30. *There is no man that has left the comfort of his estate or relations for the kingdom of God's sake*, rather than they should hinder either his services to that kingdom, or his enjoyments of it, *who shall not receive manifold more in this present time*, in the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, in the pleasures of communion with God, and of a good conscience, advantages, which to those that know how to value and improve them, will abundantly countervail all their losses. Yet that is not all, in the world to come they *shall receive life everlasting*, which is the thing that the ruler seemed to have his eye and heart upon.

31. ¶ Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all

things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. 32. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; 33. And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. 34. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

Here is, 1. The notice Christ gave to his disciples of his sufferings and death approaching, and of the glorious issue of them, which he himself had a perfect sight and fore-knowledge of, and thought it necessary to give them warning of, that it might be the less surprize and terror to them.

Two things here are, which we had not in the other evangelists, (1.) That the *sufferings* of Christ are here spoken of as the *fulfilling of the scriptures*, with which consideration Christ reconciled himself to them, and would reconcile them. *All things that are written by the prophets, concerning the Son of man*, especially the hardships he should undergo, *shall be accomplished*. Note, The Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament prophets, *testified beforehand his sufferings*, and *the glory that shall follow*, 1 Pet. i. 11. This proves that the scriptures are the *word of God*, for they had their exact and full accomplishment; and that Jesus Christ was *sent of God*, for they had their accomplishment *in him*; this was *he that should come*, for whatever was *foretold* concerning the Messiah, was verified in him; and he would submit to any thing for the fulfilling of scripture, that not one jot or tittle of that should fall to the ground. This makes the *offence of the cross to cease*, and puts an honour upon it. *Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer*, thus it became him. (2.) That the ignominy and disgrace done to Christ in his sufferings, is here most insisted upon. The other evangelists had said, he should be *mocked*, but here it is added, *He should be spitefully treated*, *ὀνειδισθήσεται*, he shall be loaded with contumely and contempt, shall have all possible reproach put upon him. This was that part of his sufferings, by which, in a spiritual manner he satisfied God's justice for the injury we had done him in his honour by sin. Here is one particular instance of disgrace done him, that *he was spit upon*, which had been particularly foretold, *Isa. l. 6*. But here, as always, when Christ spoke of his sufferings and death, he foretold his resurrection, as that which took off both the terror and reproach of his sufferings; *the third day he shall rise again*.

2. The confusion that the disciples were hereby put into; this was so contrary to the notions they had had of the Messiah and his kingdom, such a balk to their expectations from their Master, and such a breaking of all their measures, that *they understood none of these things*, ver. 34. Their prejudices were so strong that they would not understand them literally, and they could not understand them otherwise, so that they did not understand them at all; it was a mystery, it was a riddle to them, it must be so, it must be so, but they think it impossible to be reconciled with the glory and honour of the Messiah, and the designs of setting up his kingdom. This saying was *hid from them*, *νεκρυμμένον ἀπ' αὐτῶν*, it was Apocrypha to them, they could not receive it, for their parts they had read the Old Testament many a time, but they could never see any thing in it that should be *accomplished* in the disgrace and death of this Messiah. They were so intent upon the prophecies, that spoke of his glory, that they over-look those who spoke of his *sufferings*, which the scribes and doctors of the law should have directed them to take notice of, and should have brought into their creeds and catechisms as well as the other; but they did not suit their scheme, and therefore were laid aside. Note, Therefore it is that people run into mistakes, because they *read their bibles by the halves*, and are as partial in the prophets as they are in the law. They are only for the *smooth things*, *Isa. xxx. 10*. Thus now we are too apt in reading the prophecies, that were yet to be fulfilled, to have our expectations raised of the glorious state of the church in the latter days: But we overlook its wilderness, sackcloth state, and are willing to fancy that is over, and nothing is reserved for us but the halcyon days; and then, when tribulation and persecution ariseth, we do not *understand it*, neither *know we the things that are done*; though we are told as plainly as can be, that *through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God*.

35. ¶ And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging. 36. And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. 37. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. 38. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. 39. And they which went before, rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. 40. And Jesus stood and commanded him to be brought unto him; and when he was come near, he asked him, 41. Saying,



41. Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. 42. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. 43. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

Christ came not only to bring *light* to a *dark* world, and so to set before us the *objects* we are to have in view, but also to give *sight* to blind *souls*, and by healing the *organ* to enable them to view those objects: As a token of this he cured many of their bodily blindness; we have now an account of one to whom he gave sight near Jericho. Mark gives us an account of one, and names him, whom he cured as he went out of Jericho, Mark x. 46. Matthew speaks of two, whom he cured as they departed from Jericho, Matt. xx. 30. Luke saith it was, ἐν τῇ ἐξῆλθει αὐτῶν, when he was near to Jericho, which might be when he was going out of it, as well as when he was coming into it. Observe,

1. This poor blind man sat by the way-side begging, ver. 35. It seems, he was not only blind but poor, had nothing to subsist on, nor any relations to maintain him; the fitter emblem of the world of mankind which Christ came to heal and save, they are therefore wretched and miserable; for they are both poor and blind, Rev. iii. 17. He sat begging, for he was blind and could not work for his living. Note, Those ought to be relieved by charity, whom the providence of God has any way disabled to get their own bread. Such objects of charity by the way-side ought not to be over-looked by us; Christ here cast a favourable eye upon a common beggar, and though there are cheats among such, yet they must not therefore be all thought so.

2. Hearing the noise of a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant, ver. 36. This we had not before: It teacheth us that it is good to be inquisitive, and those that are so some time or other find the benefit of it. Those that want their sight, should make so much the better use of their hearing; and when they cannot see with their own eyes, should, by asking questions, make use of other peoples eyes. So this blind man did, and by that means came to understand that Jesus of Nazareth passed by, ver. 37. It is good being in Christ's way; and when we have an opportunity of applying ourselves to him, not to let it slip.

3. His prayer has in it a great deal, both of faith and fervency. Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me, ver. 38. He owns Christ to be the Son of David, the Messiah promised, he believes him to be Jesus, a Saviour, he believes he is able to help and succour him, and earnestly begs his favour; have mercy on me, pardon my sin, pity my misery, Christ is a merciful king; those that apply themselves to him as the Son of David, shall find him so, and ask enough for themselves when they pray, have mercy on us; for Christ's mercy includes all.

4. Those that are in good earnest for Christ's favours and blessings, will not be put by from the pursuit of them, though they meet with opposition and rebuke. They that went along chid him as troublesome to the Master, noisy and impertinent, and bid him hold his peace; but he went on with his petition, nay, the check given him was but as a dam to a full stream, which makes it swell so much the more; he cried the louder, Son of David, have mercy on me. Those that would speed in prayer must be importunate in prayer. This history, in the close of the chapter, speaks the same thing with the parable in the beginning of the chapter, That men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

5. Christ encourageth poor beggars, whom men frown upon, and invites them to come to him, and is ready to entertain them, and bid them welcome. He commanded him to be brought to him. Note, Christ has more tenderness and compassion for distressed supplicants, than any of his followers have. Though Christ was upon his journey, yet he stopped, and stood, and commanded him to be brought to him. Those that had checked him, must now lend him their hands to lead him to Christ.

6. Though Christ knows all our wants, he will know them from us, ver. 41. What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? By spreading our case before God, and a particular remonstrance of our wants and burthens, we teach ourselves to value the mercy we are in pursuit of; and it is necessary we should, else we are not fit to receive it. This man poured out his soul before Christ when he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. Thus particular should we be in prayer, upon particular occasions.

7. The prayer of faith, guided by Christ's encouraging promises, and grounded on them, shall not be in vain; nay, it shall not only receive an answer of peace, but of honour, ver. 42. Christ said, Receive thy sight, thy faith has made thee whole. True faith will produce fervency in prayer, and both together will fetch in abundance of the fruits of Christ's favour; and they are then doubly comfortable when they come in that way, when we are saved by faith.

8. The grace of Christ ought to be thankfully acknowledged to the glory of God, ver. 43. (1.) The poor beggar himself, that had his sight restored, followed Christ, glorifying God. Christ made it his business to glorify his Father; and those whom he healed then pleased him best, when they praised God, as those shall please God best, that praise Christ, and do him honour, for

in confessing that he is Lord, we give glory to God the Father. It is for the glory of God, if we follow Christ, as those will do whose eyes are opened. (2.) The people that saw it could not forbear giving praise to God, who had given such power to the Son of man, and by him had conferred such favours on the sons of men. Note, We must give praise to God for his mercies to others, as well as for mercies to ourselves.

## CHAP. XIX.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The conversion of Zaccheus, the publican at Jericho, ver. 1—10. (2.) The parable of the pounds which the king intrusted with his servants, and of his rebellious citizens, ver. 11—27. (3.) Christ's riding in triumph (such triumph as it was) into Jerusalem; and his lamentation in prospect of the ruin of that city, ver. 28—44. (4.) His teaching in the temple, and casting the buyers and sellers out of it, ver. 45—48.

1. **A**ND Jesus entered, and passed through Jericho. 2. And behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. 3. And he sought to see Jesus who he was, and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. 4. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him; for he was to pass that way. 5. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. 6. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. 7. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. 8. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold. 9. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is the son of Abraham. 10. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Many, no doubt, were converted to the faith of Christ, of whom no account is kept in the gospels, but the conversion of some, whose case had something in it extraordinary, is recorded, as this of Zaccheus. Christ passed through Jericho, ver. 1. That city was built under a curse, yet Christ honoured it with his presence, for the gospel takes away the curse. Though it ought not to have been built, yet it was not therefore a sin to live in it, when it was built. Christ was now going from the other side Jordan to Bethany near Jerusalem to raise Lazarus to life; when he was going to do one good work, he contrived to do many by the way. He did good both to the souls and to the bodies of people; we have here an instance of the former. Observe,

First, Who, and what this Zaccheus was.

His name speaks him a Jew, Zaccari was a common name among the Jews; they had a famous rabbin much about this time, of that name. Observe,

1. His calling, and the post he was in; he was the chief among the publicans. Receiver-general, other publicans were officers under him; he was, as some think, farmer of the customs. We often read of publicans coming to Christ. But here was one that was chief of the publicans, was in authority, that enquired after him. God has his remnant among all sorts; Christ came to save even the chief of sinners, and therefore even the chief of publicans.

2. His circumstances in the world were very considerable. He was rich. The inferior publicans were commonly men of broken fortunes, and low in the world; but he that was chief of the publicans had raised a good estate. Christ had lately shewed how hard it is for rich people to enter into the kingdom of God, yet presently produceth an instance of one rich man, that had been lost, and was found, and that not, as the prodigal, by being reduced to want.

Secondly, How he came in Christ's way, and what was the occasion of his acquaintance with him.

1. He had a great curiosity to see Jesus, what kind of a man he was, having heard talk of him, ver. 3. It is natural to us to come in sight of those whose fame has filled our ears, as being apt to imagine there is something extraordinary in their countenances; at least, he would be able to say hereafter, he had seen such and such great men. But the eye is not satisfied with seeing. We should now seek to see Jesus with an eye of faith; to see who he is, should address ourselves in holy ordinances with this in our eye, We would see Jesus.

2. He could not get his curiosity gratified in this matter, because he was little, and the crowd was great. Christ did not study



study to *shew himself*, was not carried on mens shoulders, as the pope is in procession, that all men might see him, neither he nor his kingdom *came with observation*, he did not ride in an open chariot, as princes do, but as *one of us*, he was *lost in a crowd*; for that was the day of his humiliation. Zaccheus was *low of stature*, and over-topped by all about him, so that he could not get a sight of Jesus. Many that are little of stature have large souls, and are lively in spirit. Who would not rather be a Zaccheus than a Saul, though he was *higher by head and shoulders* than all about him? Let not those that are little of stature *take thought* of adding *cubits* to it.

3. Because he would not balk his fancy, he *forgot his gravity*, as chief of the publicans, and *ran before* like a boy, and *climbed up into a sycamore-tree* to see him. Note, Those that sincerely desire a sight of Christ, will use the proper means for gaining a sight of him, and will break through a deal of difficulty and opposition, and be willing to take pains to see him. Those that find themselves *little*, must take all the advantages they can get to *raise themselves* to a sight of Christ, and not be ashamed to own that they need them, and all little enough. Let not dwarfs despair, with good help, by aiming high to reach high.

Thirdly, The notice Christ took of him, and the call he gave him to a further acquaintance, *ver. 5.* and the efficacy of that call, *ver. 6.*

1. Christ *invited himself* to Zaccheus's house, not doubting of his hearty welcome there; nay, wherever Christ comes, as he brings his own *entertainment* along with him, so he brings his own *welcome*, he opens the heart, and inclines it to receive him. Christ *looked up* into the tree and *saw* Zaccheus. He came to look upon Christ, and resolved to take particular notice of him, but little thought of being taken notice of by Christ. That was an honour too great, and too far above his merit for him to have any thought of. See how Christ *prevented* him with the blessings of his goodness, and *out-did* his expectations; and see how he *encouraged* very weak beginnings, and helped them forward. He that had a mind to know Christ, shall be *known of him*; that only courted to see him, shall be admitted to converse with him. Note, Those that are faithful in a little, shall be entrusted with more. And sometimes, those that come to hear the word of Christ, as Zaccheus did, only for curiosity, beyond what they thought of, have their consciences awakened, and their hearts changed. Christ called him *by name*, *Zaccheus*, for he knows his chosen *by name*, *are they not in his book?* He might ask, as Nathaniel did, *John i. 48.* *Whence knowest thou me?* But before he climbed the sycamore-tree Christ saw him, and knew him. He bid him *make haste and come down*. Those that Christ calls must *come down*, must humble themselves, and not think to climb to heaven by any righteousness of their own: And they must *make haste* and come down, for delays are dangerous. Zaccheus must not hesitate, but hasten; he knows it is not a matter that needs consideration, whether he should welcome such a guest to his house. He must *come down*, for Christ intends this day to *bait at his house*, and stay an hour or two with him. *Behold, he stands at the door and knocks.*

2. Zaccheus was *overjoyed* to have such an honour put upon his house, *ver. 6.* *he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.* And his receiving him *into his house*, was an indication and token of his receiving him *into his heart*. Note, When Christ *calls* to us, we must *make haste* to answer his calls; and when he *comes to us*, we must *receive him joyfully*; *lift up your heads, O ye gates.* We may well *receive him joyfully*, who brings all good along with him, and when he takes possession of the soul, opens springs of joy there, which shall flow to eternity. How often has Christ said to us, *Open to me*, when we have with the spouse made excuses, *Cant. v. 2, 3.* Zaccheus's forwardness to receive Christ, will shame us. We have not now Christ to entertain in our houses, but we have his disciples, and what is done to them he takes as done to himself.

Fourthly, The offence which the people took at this *kind greeting* between Christ and Zaccheus. Those narrow-souled censorious Jews *murmured*, saying, that he was *gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner*, *παρά αμαρτωλῶ ἀνδρὶ*, with a *sinful man*; and were not they themselves sinful men? Was it not Christ's errand into the world to seek and save *men* that are *sinners*? But Zaccheus they think to be a sinner above all men that dwelt in Jericho; such a sinner as was not fit to be conversed with.

Now this was very unjust to blame Christ for going to *his house*; For, (1.) Though he was a publican, and many of the publicans were *ill men*, it did not therefore follow that they were *all so*; we must take heed of condemning men in the lump, or by common fame, for at God's bar every man will be judged as he is. (2.) Though he *had been* a sinner, it did not therefore follow that he was now as bad as he had been; though they knew his past life to be bad, Christ might know his present frame to be good. God allows room for repentance, and so must we. (3.) Though he was *now a sinner*, they ought not to blame Christ for going to him, because he was in *no danger* of getting hurt by a sinner, but in *great hopes* of doing good to a sinner; whither should the physician go but to the sick? Yet see how that which is *well done* may be *ill construed*.

Fifthly, The proofs which Zaccheus gave publicly, that though he had been a *sinner*, he was now a *penitent*, and a *true convert*, *ver. 8.* He doth not expect to be justified by his works, as the Pharisee, who boasted of what he had done, but by his *good works* he will, through the grace of God, evidence the *sincerity* of his *faith* and *repentance*; and here he declares what his determination was. He makes this declaration *standing*, that he might be seen and heard by those who murmured at Christ for coming to his house; *with the mouth confession is made* of repentance as well as faith. He *stood*, which notes his saying it deliberately and with solemnity, in the nature of a vow to God. He addressed himself to Christ in it, not to the people, they were not to be his judges, but to the Lord, and he *stands* as it were at his bar. What we do that is good, we must *do as unto him*; we must appeal to him and approve ourselves to him in our integrity, in all our good purposes and resolutions. He makes it appear that there is a change in his heart (and that is repentance) for there is a change in his way.

His resolutions are of second table-duties; for Christ, upon all occasions, laid great stress on them; and they are such as are suited to his condition and character; for in them will best appear the truth of our repentance.

1. Zaccheus had a good estate, and whereas he had been in it hitherto laying up treasure for himself, and doing hurt to himself; now he resolves that for the future he will be all towards God, and do good to others with it, *Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.* Not I will give it by my will, when I die, but I *do* give it now. Probably he had heard of the command of trial Christ gave to another rich man, to sell what he had and give to the poor, *Matt. xix. 21.* and how he broke with Christ upon it: But so will not I, faith Zaccheus, I agree to it, at the first word; though hitherto I have been uncharitable to the poor, now I will relieve them, and give so much the more for having neglected the duty so long. Even the *half of my goods*, which is a very large proportion to be set apart for works of piety and charity. The Jews used to say, that a fifth part of a man's income yearly, was very fair to be given to pious uses, and about that share the law directed, but Zaccheus would go much further, and give the one moiety to the poor; which would oblige him to retrench all his extravagant expences, as his retrenching those would enable him to relieve many with his superfluities. If we were but more temperate and self-denying, we should be more charitable; and were we content with less ourselves, we should have the more to give to them that need. This he mentions here as a fruit of his repentance. Note, It well becomes converts to God to be charitable to the poor.

2. Zaccheus was conscious to himself that he had not gotten all he had honestly and fairly, but some by indirect and unlawful means, and of what he had gotten by such means he promiseth to make restitution; *If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation*, or if I have wronged any man in the way of my business, as a publican, exacting more than was appointed, I do promise to restore him *four-fold*, the restitution that a thief was to make, *Exod. xxii. 1.* (1.) He seems plainly to own that he had *done wrong*; his office, as a publican, gave him opportunity to do wrong, of imposing upon the merchants to curry favour with the government. True penitents will own themselves not only in general guilty before God, but will particularly reflect upon that which has been their own iniquity, and which by reason of their business and employment in the world has most easily beset them. (2.) That he had done wrong *by false accusation*, this was the temptation of the publicans, which John Baptist had warned them of particularly, *Luke iii. 14.* They had the ear of the government, and every thing would be stretched in favour of the revenue, which gave them an opportunity of gratifying their revenge, if they bore a man an ill-will. (3.) He promiseth to restore *four-fold*, as far as he could recollect, or find by his books that he had *wronged any man*. He doth not say, if I be sued, and compelled to it, I will make restitution; some are *honest* when they cannot help it; but he will do it *voluntarily*, it shall be *my own act and deed*. Note, Those who are convinced of having done wrong, cannot evidence the sincerity of their repentance but by *making restitution*. Observe, He doth not think his giving half his estate to the poor will atone for the wrong he has done; God *hates robbery for burnt-offerings*, and we must first *do justly* and then *love mercy*. It is no charity but hypocrisy to give that which is *none of our own*, and we are not to reckon that our own, which we have not come honestly by; nor that our own, which is not so, when all our debts are paid, and restitution made for wrong done.

Sixthly, Christ's *approbation* and *acceptance* of Zaccheus's conversion, by which also he cleared himself from any imputation in going to be a guest with him, *ver. 9, 10.*

1. Zaccheus is declared to be now a *happy man*; now he is turned from sin to God, now he has bid Christ welcome to his house, and is become an honest, charitable, good man, *This day is salvation come to this house.* Now he is *converted*, he is in effect *saved*, saved from his sins, from the guilt of them, from the power of them; all the benefits of salvation are his; Christ is come to *his house*, and where Christ comes he brings salvation along with him; he is, and will be, the *author of eternal salvation* to



to all that own him as Zaccheus did. Yet this is not all: Salvation this day comes to his house, (1.) When Zaccheus becomes a convert, he will be more than he had been, a blessing to his house. He will bring the means of grace and salvation to his house, for he is a son of Abraham indeed now, and therefore, like Abraham, will teach his household to keep the way of the Lord. He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house, and brings a curse upon it, Hab. ii. 9. But he that is charitable to the poor, doth a kindness to his own house, and brings a blessing upon it, and salvation to it, temporal at least, Psal. cxii. 3. (2.) When Zaccheus is brought to Christ himself, his family also became related to Christ, and his children are admitted members of his church, and so salvation comes to his house, for that he is a son of Abraham, and therefore interested in God's covenant with Abraham, that blessing of Abraham which comes upon the publicans, upon the Gentiles, through faith, that God will be a God, to them, and to their children, and therefore when he believes, salvation comes to his house, as to the goaler's, to whom it was said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house, Acts xvi. 31. Zaccheus is by birth a son of Abraham, but, being a publican, he was deemed a heathen, they are put upon a level, Matt. xviii. 17. And as such the Jews were shy of conversing with him, and expected Christ should be so, but he shews, that being a true penitent, he is become *rectus in curia*, as good a son of Abraham, as if he had never been a publican, which therefore ought not to be mentioned against him.

2. What Christ had done to make him, in particular, a happy man was consonant to the great design and intention of his coming into the world, ver. 10. with the same argument he had before justified his conversing with publicans, Matt. ix. 13. There he pleaded, that he came to call sinners to repentance; now that he came to seek and save that which was lost; τὸ ἀπολωλός, the lost thing. Observe, (1.) The deplorable case of the sons of men; they were lost; but here the whole race of mankind is spoken of as one body. Note, The whole world of mankind, by the fall, is become a lost world: Lost, as a city is lost when it is revolted to the rebels; as a traveller is lost, when he has missed his way in a wilderness; lost, as a sick man is lost, when his disease is incurable; or as a prisoner is lost when sentence is passed upon him. (2.) The gracious design of the Son of God, he came to seek and save, to seek in order to saving. He came from heaven to earth (a long journey!) to seek that which was lost, i. e. which had wandered and gone astray, and to bring it back; Matt. xviii. 11, 12. and to save that which was lost, i. e. which was perishing, and in a manner destroyed and cut off. Christ undertook the cause, when it was given up for lost; undertook to bring those to themselves, that were lost to God and all goodness. Observe, Christ came into this lost world to seek and save it: His design was to save, when there was not salvation in any other. And in prosecution of that design he sought, took all probable means, to effect that salvation. He seeks those that were not worth seeking to; he seeks to those that sought him not, and asked not for him, as to Zaccheus here.

11. And as they heard these things, he added, and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12. He said therefore, A certain noble man went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. 15. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. 20. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21. For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. 22. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23. Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming

I might have required mine own with usury? 24. And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. 25. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) 26. For I say unto you, that unto every one which hath, shall be given: and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. 27. But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

Our Lord Jesus is now upon his way to Jerusalem, to his last passover, when he was to suffer and die; now here we are told,

1. How the expectations of his friends were raised upon this occasion. They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear, ver. 11. The Pharisees expected it about this time, chap. xvii. 20. and, it seems, so did Christ's own disciples; but they both had a mistaken notion of it: The Pharisees thought it must be introduced by some other temporal prince or potentate: The disciples thought their Master should introduce it, but with temporal pomp and power, which with the power he had to work miracles, they knew he could clothe himself with in short time, whenever he pleased. Jerusalem they concluded must be the seat of his kingdom, and therefore now he is going directly thither, they doubt not but in a little time to see him upon the throne there. Note, Even good men are subject to mistakes concerning the kingdom of Christ, and to form wrong notions of it, and are ready to think that should immediately appear, which is reserved for hereafter.

2. How their expectations were checked, and the mistakes rectified, upon which they were founded; and this he doth in three things.

First, They expected that he should appear in his glory now presently, but he tells them he must not be publicly installed in his kingdom of a great while yet; He is like a certain nobleman, ἀνδρὸς τῆς ἐυγενίης, a certain man of high birth, so Dr. Hammond; for he is the Lord from heaven, and is intitled by birth to the kingdom; but he goes into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom. Christ must go to heaven to sit down at the right hand of the Father there, and to receive from him honour and glory, before the Spirit was poured out, by which his kingdom was to be set up on earth, and before a church was to be set up for him in the Gentile world; He must receive the kingdom, and then return: Christ returned when the Spirit was poured out; when Jerusalem was destroyed, by which time that generation, both of friends and enemies, which he had personally conversed with, was wholly worn off by death, and gone to give up their account. But his chief return here meant, is that at the great day, which we are yet in expectation of. That which they thought should immediately appear, Christ tells them will not appear, till this same Jesus, which is taken into heaven, shall in like manner come again, see Acts i. 11.

Secondly, They expected that his apostles and immediate attendants should be advanced to dignity and honour, that they should all be made princes and peers, privy-counsellors and judges, and have all the pomp and preferments of the court, and of the town; but Christ here tells them, that instead of that, he designed them to be men of business, they must expect no other preferment in this world, but that of the trading end of the town; he would set them up with a stock under their hands, that they might employ it to themselves in serving him, and the interest of his kingdom among men. That is the true honour of a Christian and a minister, which if we be as we ought to be, truly ambitious of, we shall be able to look upon all temporal honours with a holy contempt. The apostles had dreamed of sitting on his right hand, and on his left in his kingdom, enjoying ease after their present toil, and honour after the present contempt put upon them, and were pleasing themselves with this dream; but Christ tells them that, which, if they understood it aright, would fill them with care and concern, and serious thoughts, instead of those aspiring ones they filled their heads with.

1. They have a great work to do now; their Master leaves them, to receive his kingdom, and, at parting, he gives each of them a pound, which the margin of our common bibles tells us, amounts in our money to three pounds, and half a crown; this signifies the same thing with the talents, in the parable that is parallel to this, Matt. xxv. all the gifts, with which Christ's apostles were endued, and the advantages and capacities they had, of serving the interests of Christ in the world, and others, both ministers and Christians, like them in a lower degree. But perhaps it is in the parable thus represented, to make them the more humble; their honour in this world is only that of traders, and that not of topping merchants, that have vast stocks to begin upon, but that of poor traders, that must take a great deal of care and pains to make any thing of what they have.

He gave these pounds to his servants, not to buy rich liveries, much less robes, and a splendid equipage for themselves to appear in, as they expected, but with this charge, Occupy till I come.



Or, (as it might much better be translated) *Trade till I come*, *παραμυθεύσατε*, *be busy*. So the word properly signifies, you are sent forth to preach the gospel, to set up a church for Christ in the world, to bring the nations to the obedience of faith, and to build them up in it; *Ye shall receive power to do this*, for ye shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, Acts i. 8. When Christ breathed on the eleven disciples, saying, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, then he delivered them *ten pounds*; now, faith he, mind your business, and make a business of it, set about it in good earnest, and stick to it, lay out yourselves to do all the good you can to the souls of men, and to gather them in to Christ. Note, (1.) All Christians have *business* to do for Christ in this world, and ministers especially; the one was not *baptized*, nor the other *ordained* to be idle. (2.) Those that are called to business for Christ, he furnisheth with gifts necessary for their business; and, on the other hand, those to whom he gives power, from them he expects service. He delivers the *pounds* with this charge, go work, go trade. *The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*, 1 Cor. xii. 7. And as every one has received the gifts, so let him minister the same, 1 Pet. iv. 10. (3.) We must continue to mind our business till our Master comes; whatever difficulties or oppositions we may meet with in it; those only that endure to the end shall be saved.

2. They have a great account to make shortly. These servants are called to him, to shew what use they made of the gifts they were dignified with, what service they had done to Christ, and what good to the souls of men, that he might know what every man had gained by trading. Note, 1. They that trade diligently and faithfully in the service of Christ shall be gainers; we cannot say so of the business of the world, many a labouring tradesman has been a loser, but those that trade for Christ shall be gainers; though *Israel be not gathered*, yet they will be glorious. 2. The conversion of souls, is the winning of them; every true convert is clear gain to Jesus Christ. Ministers are but factors for him, and to him they must give account what fish they have inclosed in the gospel-net; what guests they have prevailed with, to come to the wedding-supper; that is, what they have gained by trading. Now in the account given up observe,

1. The good account, which was given by some of the servants, and the master's approbation of them. Two such are instanced, ver. 16, 19.

1. They had both made considerable improvements, but not both alike, one had gained *ten pounds* by his trading, and another *five*. Those that are diligent and faithful in serving Christ, are commonly blessed in being made blessings to the places where they live. They shall see the travel of their soul, and not labour in vain. And yet all that are alike faithful, are not alike successful. And perhaps though they were both faithful, it is intimated, that one of them took more pains, and applied himself more closely to his business than the other, and sped accordingly; blessed Paul sure was this servant that gained *ten pounds*, double to what any of the rest did, for he laboured more abundantly than they all, and fully preached the gospel of Christ.

2. They both acknowledged their obligations to their Master, for intrusting them with these abilities and opportunities to do him service, Lord, it is not my industry, but thy pound that has gained *ten pounds*. Note, God must have all the glory of all our gains; not unto us, but unto him must be the praises; Psal. cxv. 1. Paul, who gained the *ten pounds*, acknowledges, *I laboured, yet not I. By the grace of God, I am what I am*, and do what I do, and his grace was not in vain, 1 Cor. xv. 10. and will not speak of what he had done, but of what God had done by him, Rom. xv. 18.

3. They were both commended for their fidelity and industry, *Well done, thou good servant*, ver. 17. And to the other he said likewise, ver. 19. Note, They who do that which is good, shall have praise of the same. Do well, and Christ will say to thee, well done; and if he saith well done, the matter is not great who saith otherwise. See Gen. iv. 7.

4. They were preferred in proportion to the improvement they had made. *Because thou hast been faithful in a very little*, and didst not say, as good fit still as go to trade with one pound, what can one do with so small a stock, but didst humbly and honestly apply thyself to the improvement of that, have thou authority over ten cities. Note, Those are in a fair way to rise, who are content to begin low. He that has used the office of a deacon well, purchaseth to himself a good degree, 1 Tim. iii. 13. Two things are hereby promised the apostles, (1.) That when they have taken pains to plant many churches, they shall have the satisfaction and honour of presiding in them, and governing among them; they shall have great respect paid them, and have a great interest in the love and esteem of good Christians. He that keepeth the fig-tree, shall eat the fruit thereof; and he that laboreth in the word and doctrine, shall be counted worthy of double honour. (2.) That when they have served their generation according to the will of Christ, though they pass through this world despised and trampled upon, and perhaps pass out of it, under disgrace and persecution, as the apostles did, yet in the other world they shall reign as kings, with Christ, shall sit with him on his throne, shall have power over the nations, Rev. ii. 26. The happiness of heaven will be a much greater advancement to a good minister,

or Christian, than it would be to a poor tradesman, that with much ado had cleared ten pound, to be made governour of ten cities. He that had gained but *five pounds*, had dominion over five cities. This intimates that there are degrees of glory in heaven; every vessel will be alike full, but not alike large. And the degrees of glory there, will be according to the degrees of usefulness here.

2. The bad account that was given by one of them, and the sentence passed upon him, for his slothfulness and unfaithfulness, ver. 20, &c.

1. He owned that he had not traded with the pound, with which he had been intrusted, ver. 20. Lord, behold, here is thy pound, it is true I have not made it more, but withal I have not made it less, I have kept it safe laid up in a napkin. This represents the carelessness of those who have gifts, but never lay out themselves to do good with them; it is all one to them, whether the interests of Christ's kingdom sink or swim, go backward or forward, for their parts they will take no care about it, no pains, be at no expences, run no hazard; those are the servants that lay up their pound in a napkin; who think it is enough to say, they have done no hurt in the world, but did no good.

2. He justified himself in his omission, with a plea that made the matter worse, and not better, ver. 21. I feared thee, because thou art an austere man, rigid and severe *ἀνδραγαθὸς ἀυστρός ἐστι*; austere is the Greek word itself; a sharp man; thou takest up that thou laidst not down. He thought his master put a hardship upon his servants, when he required and expected the improvement of their pounds, that it was reaping where he did not sow, whereas really it was reaping where he had sown, and, as the husbandman, expects in proportion to what he had sown. He had no reason to fear his master's austerity, nor blame his expectations, but this was a meer sham; a frivolous groundless excuse for his idleness, which there was no manner of colour for. Note, The pleas of slothful professors, when they come to be examined, will be found more to their shame, than in their justification.

3. His excuse is turned upon him, ver. 22. out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. He will be condemned by his crime, but self-condemned by his plea. If thou didst look upon it as hard, that I should expect the profits of thy trading, which would have been the greater profit; yet, if thou hadst had any regard to my interest, thou mightest have put it into the bank, into some of the funds, that I might have had, not only mine own, but mine own with usury, which, though less advantage, would have been some. If he durst not trade, for fear of losing the principal, and so being made accountable to his Lord for it, though it was lost, which he pretends, yet that would be no excuse for his not setting it out to interest, where it would be sure. Note, Whatever may be the pretences of slothful professors in excuse of their slothfulness, the true reason of it is a reigning indifference to the interests of Christ, and his kingdom; and their coldness therein. They care not whether religion gets ground, or loses ground, so they can but live at ease.

4. His pound is taken from him, ver. 24. It is fit those should lose their gifts, that will not use their gifts; and those who have dealt falsely, should be no longer trusted. Those that will not serve their Master with what he bestows upon them, why should they be suffered to serve themselves with it? Take from him the pound.

5. It is given to him that had got the *ten pounds*. And when this was objected against by the standers-by, because he had so much already, Lord, he has *ten pounds*, ver. 25. it is answered, ver. 26. unto every one that hath, shall be given. It is the rule of justice, (1.) That those should be most encouraged, that have been most industrious, and that those who have laid out themselves most to do good, should have their opportunities of doing good enlarged, and be put into a higher and more extensive sphere of usefulness. To him that hath gotten, shall more be given, that he may be in a capacity to get more. (2.) That those who have their gifts, as if they had them not, that have them to no purpose, that do no good with them, should be deprived of them. Those that endeavour to increase the grace they have, God will increase it; those that neglect it, and suffer it to decline, can expect no other, but that God should do so too. This needful warning Christ gives to his disciples, lest while they were gaping for honours on earth they should neglect their business, and so come short of their happiness in heaven.

Thirdly, Another thing they expected, was that when the kingdom of God should appear, the body of the Jewish nation should immediately fall in with it, and submit to it, and all their aversions to Christ and his gospel should immediately vanish; but Christ tells them that after his departure, the generality of them would persist in their obstinacy and rebellion, and it would be their ruin. This is shewed here,

1. In the message which his citizens sent after him, ver. 14. They not only opposed him, while he was in obscurity, but when he was gone in glory to be invested in his kingdom, then they continued their enmity to him, protested against his dominion, and said, *We will not have this man to reign over us*. (1.) This was fulfilled in the prevailing infidelity of the Jews after the ascension of Christ, and the setting up of the gospel kingdom; they would not submit their necks to his yoke, nor touch the top of his



his golden scepter. They said, *Let us break his bands in sunder*, Psal. ii. 1, 2, 3. Acts iv. 26. (2.) It speaks the language of all unbelievers, they could be content that Christ should *save them*, but they will not have him to *reign over them*; whereas Christ is a Saviour to those only to whom he is a prince, and who are willing to obey him.

2. In the sentence passed upon them at his return, *ver. 27. Those mine enemies bring hither*. When his faithful subjects are preferred and rewarded, then he will take vengeance on his enemies; and particularly of the Jewish nation, the doom of which is here read. When Christ had set up his gospel kingdom, and thereby put reputation upon the gospel ministry, then he comes to *reckon with the Jews*; then it is remembered against them, *that they had particularly disclaimed and protested against his kingly office*, when they say, *we have no king but Cæsar*, nor would own him for their king; they appealed to Cæsar, and to Cæsar they shall go; Cæsar shall be their ruin. Then the *kingdom of God appeared*, when vengeance was taken on those irreconcilable enemies to Christ and his government, they were *brought forth and slain before him*. Never was so much slaughter made in any war, as in the wars of the Jews. That nation lived to see Christianity victorious in the Gentile world, in spite of their enmity and opposition to it, and then it was *taken away as dross*. The wrath of Christ came upon them to the uttermost, 1 *Thes. ii. 25, 26.* and their destruction redounded very much to the honour of Christ, and the peace of the church. But this is applicable to all others who *persist* in their infidelity, and will undoubtedly perish in it. Note, 1. Utter ruin will certainly be the portion of all Christ's enemies; in the day of vengeance they shall all be brought forth and slain before him. *Bring them hither* to be made a spectacle to saints and angels, see *Josh. x. 22, 24. Bring them hither* that they may see the glory and happiness of Christ and his followers, whom they hated and persecuted. *Bring them hither* to have their frivolous pleas over-ruled, and to receive sentence according to their merits. *Bring them and slay them before me*, as Agag before Samuel. The Saviour whom they have slighted, will stand by and see them slain, and not interpose on their behalf. 2. Those that will not have Christ to reign over them, shall be reputed and dealt with as his enemies. We are ready to think none are Christ's enemies, but persecutors of Christianity, or scoffers at least, but you see those will be accounted so that dislike the terms of salvation, will not submit to Christ's yoke, but will be their own masters. Note, Whoever will not be ruled by the grace of Christ, will inevitably be ruined by the wrath of Christ.

28. ¶ And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. 29. And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called *the mount of Olives*, he sent two of his disciples, 30. Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither. 31. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. 32. And they that were sent, went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. 33. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? 34. And they said, The Lord hath need of him. 35. And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. 36. And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. 37. And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen, 38. Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. 39. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. 40. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

We have here the same account of Christ's riding in some sort of triumph (such as it was) into Jerusalem, which we had before in Matthew and Mark, let us therefore here only observe,

1. That Jesus Christ was forward and willing to suffer and die for us. He went forward *bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem*, knowing very well the things that should befall them there, and yet he went before, *ascending up to Jerusalem*, *ver. 28.* He was the foremost of the company, as if he longed to be upon the spot, longed to engage, to take the field, and to enter upon action. Was he so forward to suffer and die for us, and shall we draw back from any service we are capable of doing for him?

2. It was no ways inconsistent either with Christ's humility, or with his present state of humiliation, to make a *publick entry* into Jerusalem a little before he died. Thus he made himself to be the more taken notice of, that the ignominy of his death might appear the greater.

3. Christ is entitled to a dominion over all the creatures, and may use them when and as he pleaseth. No man has a property in his estate against Christ, but that his title is prior and superior. Christ sent to fetch an *ass* and her *colt* from their *owner's* and *master's crib*, when he had occasion for their service, and might do so, for all the *beasts of the forests are his*, and the tame beasts too.

4. Christ has all mens hearts both under his eye and in his hand. He could influence those to whom the ass and the colt belonged, to consent to their taking them away, as soon as they were told the Lord had occasion for them.

5. Those that go on Christ's errands, are sure to speed, *ver. 32. They that were sent, found what he told them they should find*, and the owners willing to part with them. It is a comfort to Christ's messengers, that what they are sent for, if indeed the Lord has occasion for it, they shall bring it.

6. The disciples of Christ who fetch that for him from others which he has occasion for, and which they have not, should not think that enough, but whatever they have themselves, where-with he may be served and honoured, they should be ready to serve him with it. Many can be willing to attend Christ at other people's expence, that care not at being at any charge upon him themselves; but those disciples, not only fetched the ass's colt for him, but *cast their own garments upon the colt*, and were willing those should be used for his trappings.

7. Christ's triumphs are the matter of his disciples praises. When Christ came nigh to Jerusalem, God put it of a sudden into the hearts of the *whole multitude of the disciples*, not to the twelve only, but abundance more that were disciples at large, *to rejoice and praise God*, *ver. 37.* and their *spreading their clothes in the way*, *ver. 36.* was a common expression of joy, as at the feast of tabernacles. Observe, (1.) What was the matter or occasion of their joy and praise. They praised God *for all the mighty works they had seen*, all the miracles Christ had wrought, especially the *raising of Lazarus*, which is particularly mentioned, *John xii. 17, 18.* That brought others to mind, for fresh miracles and mercies should revive the remembrance of the former. (2.) How they expressed their joy and praise, *ver. 38. Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord*; Christ is the *king*, he comes in the name of the Lord, clothed with a divine authority, commissioned from heaven to give law and treat of peace; *blessed be he*. Let us praise him, let God prosper him. He is *blessed* for ever, and we will speak well of him. *Peace in heaven*, i. e. Let the God of heaven send peace and success to his undertaking, and then there will be *glory in the highest*. It will redound to the glory of the most high God, and the angels, the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, will give him the glory of it. Compare this song of the saints on earth, with that of the angels, *Luke ii. 14.* they both agree to give glory to God in the highest, there the praises of both centre; the angels say, *on earth peace*, rejoicing in the benefit which men on earth have by Christ; the saints say, *peace in heaven*, rejoicing in the benefit which the angels have by Christ; such is the communion we have with the holy angels, that as they rejoice in the *peace on earth*, so we rejoice in the *peace in heaven*, the *peace God makes in his high places*, *Job xxv. 2.* and both in Christ, who hath reconciled all things to himself, whether *things on earth or things in heaven*.

8. Christ's triumphs and his disciples joyful praises of them are the vexation of proud Pharisees, that are enemies to him and his kingdom. There were some Pharisees among *the multitude*, that were so far from joining with them, that they were enraged at them, and Christ being a famous example of humility, they thought he would not admit such acclamations as these, and therefore expected that he should *rebuke his disciples*, *ver. 39.* But it is the honour of Christ, that as he despiseth the contempt of the proud, so he accepts the praises of the humble.

9. Whether men praise Christ or no, he will, and shall, and must be praised, *ver. 40. If these should hold their peace*, and not speak the praises of the Messiah's kingdom, *the stones would immediately cry out*, rather than that Christ should not be praised; which was in effect literally fulfilled, when upon mens reviling Christ upon the cross, instead of praising him, and his own disciples sinking into a profound silence, *the earth did quake, and the rocks rent*. Pharisees would silence the praises of Christ, but they cannot gain their point, for as God can *out of stones raise up children unto Abraham*, so he can out of the mouths of those children perfect praise.

41. ¶ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42. Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. 43. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44. And shall



Or, (as it might much better be translated) *Trade till I come*, *πρεφυλατίζεσθε*, *be busy*. So the word properly signifies, you are sent forth to preach the gospel, to set up a church for Christ in the world, to bring the nations to the obedience of faith, and to build them up in it; *Ye shall receive power to do this*, for ye shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, Acts i. 8. When Christ breathed on the eleven disciples, saying, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, then he delivered them *ten pounds*; now, faith he, mind your business, and make a business of it, set about it in good earnest, and stick to it, lay out yourselves to do all the good you can to the souls of men, and to gather them in to Christ. Note, (1.) All Christians have *business* to do for Christ in this world, and ministers especially; the one was not *baptized*, nor the other *ordained* to be idle. (2.) Those that are called to business for Christ, he furnisheth with gifts necessary for their business; and, on the other hand, those to whom he gives power, from them he expects service. He delivers the *pounds* with this charge, go work, go trade. *The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*, 1 Cor. xii. 7. And as every one has received the gifts, so let him minister the same, 1 Pet. iv. 10. (3.) We must continue to mind our business till our Master comes; whatever difficulties or oppositions we may meet with in it; those only that endure to the end shall be saved.

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2. The bad account that was given by one of them, and the sentence passed upon him, for his slothfulness and unfaithfulness, ver. 20, &c.

1. He owned that he had not traded with the pound, with which he had been intrusted, ver. 20. *Lord, behold, here is thy pound*, it is true I have not made it more, but withal I have not made it less, I have kept it safe laid up in a napkin. This represents the carelessness of those who have gifts, but never lay out themselves to do good with them; it is all one to them, whether the interests of Christ's kingdom sink or swim, go backward or forward, for their parts they will take no care about it, no pains, be at no expences, run no hazard; those are the servants that lay up their pound in a napkin; who think it is enough to say, they have done no hurt in the world, but did no good.

2. He justified himself in his omission, with a plea that made the matter worse, and not better, ver. 21. *I feared thee, because thou art an austere man*, rigid and severe *ἀνδρῶν ἀυστῆρος εἰ*; *austere* is the Greek word itself; a sharp man; *thou takest up that thou laidst not down*. He thought his master put a hardship upon his servants, when he required and expected the improvement of their pounds, that it was reaping where he did not sow, whereas really it was reaping where he had sown, and, as the husbandman, expects in proportion to what he had sown. He had no reason to fear his master's austerity, nor blame his expectations, but this was a meer sham; a frivolous groundless excuse for his idleness, which there was no manner of colour for. Note, The pleas of slothful professors, when they come to be examined, will be found more to their shame, than in their justification.

3. His excuse is turned upon him, ver. 22. *out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant*. He will be condemned by his crime, but self-condemned by his plea. If thou didst look upon it as hard, that I should expect the profits of thy trading, which would have been the greater profit; yet, if thou hadst had any regard to my interest, thou mightest have put it into the bank, into some of the funds, that I might have had, not only mine own, but mine own with usury, which, though less advantage, would have been some. If he durst not trade, for fear of losing the principal, and so being made accountable to his Lord for it, though it was lost, which he pretends, yet that would be no excuse for his not setting it out to interest, where it would be sure. Note, Whatever may be the pretences of slothful professors in excuse of their slothfulness, the true reason of it is a reigning indifference to the interests of Christ, and his kingdom; and their coldness therein. They care not whether religion gets ground, or loses ground, so they can but live at ease.

4. His pound is taken from him, ver. 24. It is fit those should lose their gifts, that will not use their gifts; and those who have dealt falsely, should be no longer trusted. Those that will not serve their Master with what he bestows upon them, why should they be suffered to serve themselves with it? *Take from him the pound*.

5. It is given to him that had got the *ten pounds*. And when this was objected against by the standers-by, because he had so much already, *Lord, he has ten pounds*, ver. 25. it is answered, ver. 26. *unto every one that hath, shall be given*. It is the rule of justice, (1.) That those should be most encouraged, that have been most industrious, and that those who have laid out themselves most to do good, should have their opportunities of doing good enlarged, and be put into a higher and more extensive sphere of usefulness. To him that hath gotten, shall more be given, that he may be in a capacity to get more. (2.) That those who have their gifts, as if they had them not, that have them to no purpose, that do no good with them, should be deprived of them. Those that endeavour to increase the grace they have, God will increase it; those that neglect it, and suffer it to decline, can expect no other, but that God should do so too. This needful warning Christ gives to his disciples, lest while they were gaping for honours on earth they should neglect their business, and so come short of their happiness in heaven.

Thirdly, Another thing they expected, was that when the kingdom of God should appear, the body of the Jewish nation should immediately fall in with it, and submit to it, and all their aversions to Christ and his gospel should immediately vanish; but Christ tells them that after his departure, the generality of them would persist in their obstinacy and rebellion, and it would be their ruin. This is shewed here,

1. In the message which his citizens sent after him, ver. 14. They not only opposed him, while he was in obscurity, but when he was gone in glory to be invested in his kingdom, then they continued their enmity to him, protested against his dominion, and said, *We will not have this man to reign over us*. (1.) This was fulfilled in the prevailing infidelity of the Jews after the ascension of Christ, and the setting up of the gospel kingdom; they would not submit their necks to his yoke, nor touch the top of his



his golden scepter. They said, *Let us break his bands in sunder*, Psal. ii. 1, 2, 3. Acts iv. 26. (2.) It speaks the language of all unbelievers, they could be content that Christ should *save them*, but they will not have him to *reign over them*; whereas Christ is a Saviour to those only to whom he is a prince, and who are willing to obey him.

2. In the sentence passed upon them at his return, *ver. 27. Those mine enemies bring hither*. When his faithful subjects are preferred and rewarded, then he will take vengeance on his enemies; and particularly of the Jewish nation, the doom of which is here read. When Christ had set up his gospel kingdom, and thereby put reputation upon the gospel ministry, then he comes to *reckon with the Jews*; then it is remembered against them, *that they had particularly disclaimed and protested against his kingly office*, when they say, *we have no king but Cæsar*, nor would own him for their king; they appealed to Cæsar, and to Cæsar they shall go; Cæsar shall be their ruin. Then the *kingdom of God appeared*, when vengeance was taken on those irreconcilable enemies to Christ and his government, they were *brought forth and slain before him*. Never was so much slaughter made in any war, as in the wars of the Jews. That nation lived to see Christianity victorious in the Gentile world, in spite of their enmity and opposition to it, and then it was *taken away as dross*. The wrath of Christ came upon them to the uttermost, 1 *Thes. ii. 25, 26.* and their destruction redounded very much to the honour of Christ, and the peace of the church. But this is applicable to all others who *persist* in their infidelity, and will undoubtedly perish in it. Note, 1. Utter ruin will certainly be the portion of all Christ's enemies; in the day of vengeance they shall all be brought forth and slain before him. Bring them hither to be made a spectacle to faints and angels, see *Josh. x. 22, 24. Bring them hither* that they may see the glory and happiness of Christ and his followers, whom they hated and persecuted. Bring them hither to have their frivolous pleas over-ruled, and to receive sentence according to their merits. Bring them and *slay them before me*, as Agag before Samuel. The Saviour whom they have slighted, will stand by and see them slain, and not interpose on their behalf. 2. Those that *will not have Christ to reign over them*, shall be reputed and dealt with as his enemies. We are ready to think none are Christ's enemies, but persecutors of Christianity, or scoffers at least, but you see those will be accounted so that dislike the terms of salvation, will not submit to Christ's yoke, but will be their own masters. Note, Whoever will not be ruled by the grace of Christ, will inevitably be ruined by the wrath of Christ.

28. ¶ And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. 29. And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called *the mount of Olives*, he sent two of his disciples, 30. Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither. 31. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. 32. And they that were sent, went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. 33. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? 34. And they said, The Lord hath need of him. 35. And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. 36. And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. 37. And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen, 38. Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. 39. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. 40. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

We have here the same account of Christ's riding in some sort of triumph (such as it was) into Jerusalem, which we had before in Matthew and Mark, let us therefore here only observe,

1. That Jesus Christ was forward and willing to suffer and die for us. He went forward *bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem*, knowing very well the things that should befall them there, and yet he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem, *ver. 28.* He was the foremost of the company, as if he longed to be upon the spot, longed to engage, to take the field, and to enter upon action. Was he so forward to suffer and die for us, and shall we draw back from any service we are capable of doing for him?

2. It was no ways inconsistent either with Christ's humility, or with his present state of humiliation, to make a *publick entry* into Jerusalem a little before he died. Thus he made himself to be the more taken notice of, that the ignominy of his death might appear the greater.

3. Christ is entitled to a dominion over all the creatures, and may use them when and as he pleaseth. No man has a property in his estate against Christ, but that his title is prior and superior. Christ sent to fetch an *ass* and her *colt* from their *owner's* and *master's crib*, when he had occasion for their service, and might do so, for all the *beasts of the forests are his*, and the tame beasts too.

4. Christ has all mens hearts both under his eye and in his hand. He could influence those to whom the ass and the colt belonged, to consent to their taking them away, as soon as they were told the Lord had occasion for them.

5. Those that go on Christ's errands, are sure to speed, *ver. 32. They that were sent, found* what he told them they should find, and the owners willing to part with them. It is a comfort to Christ's messengers, that what they are sent for, if indeed the Lord has occasion for it, they shall bring it.

6. The disciples of Christ who fetch that for him from others which he has occasion for, and which they have not, should not think that enough, but whatever they have themselves, wherewith he may be served and honoured, they should be ready to serve him with it. Many can be willing to attend Christ at other people's expence, that care not at being at any charge upon him themselves; but those disciples, not only fetched the ass's colt for him, but *cast their own garments upon the colt*, and were willing those should be used for his trappings.

7. Christ's triumphs are the matter of his disciples praises. When Christ came nigh to Jerusalem, God put it of a sudden into the hearts of the *whole multitude of the disciples*, not to the twelve only, but abundance more that were disciples at large, *to rejoice and praise God*, *ver. 37.* and their *spreading their clothes in the way*, *ver. 36.* was a common expression of joy, as at the feast of tabernacles. Observe, (1.) What was the matter or occasion of their joy and praise. They praised God *for all the mighty works they had seen*, all the miracles Christ had wrought, especially the *raising of Lazarus*, which is particularly mentioned, *John xii. 17, 18.* That brought others to mind, for fresh miracles and mercies should revive the remembrance of the former. (2.) How they expressed their joy and praise, *ver. 38. Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord*; Christ is the *king*, he comes in the name of the Lord, clothed with a divine authority, commissioned from heaven to give law and treat of peace; *blessed be he*. Let us praise him, let God prosper him. He is *blessed* for ever, and we will speak well of him. *Peace in heaven*, i. e. Let the God of heaven send peace and success to his undertaking, and then there will be *glory in the highest*. It will redound to the glory of the most high God, and the angels, the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, will give him the glory of it. Compare this song of the saints on earth, with that of the angels, *Luke ii. 14.* they both agree to give glory to God in the highest, there the praises of both centre; the angels say, *on earth peace*, rejoicing in the benefit which men on earth have by Christ; the saints say, *peace in heaven*, rejoicing in the benefit which the angels have by Christ; such is the communion we have with the holy angels, that as they rejoice in the *peace on earth*, so we rejoice in the *peace in heaven*, the *peace God makes in his high places*, *Job xxv. 2.* and both in Christ, who hath reconciled all things to himself, whether *things on earth or things in heaven*.

8. Christ's triumphs and his disciples joyful praises of them are the vexation of proud Pharisees, that are enemies to him and his kingdom. There were some Pharisees among *the multitude*, that were so far from joining with them, that they were enraged at them, and Christ being a famous example of humility, they thought he would not admit such acclamations as these, and therefore expected that he should *rebuke his disciples*, *ver. 39.* But it is the honour of Christ, that as he despiseth the contempt of the proud, so he accepts the praises of the humble.

9. Whether men praise Christ or no, he will, and shall, and must be praised, *ver. 40. If these should hold their peace*, and not speak the praises of the Messiah's kingdom, *the stones would immediately cry out*, rather than that Christ should not be praised; which was in effect literally fulfilled, when upon mens reviling Christ upon the cross, instead of praising him, and his own disciples sinking into a profound silence, the *earth did quake*, and the *rocks rent*. Pharisees would silence the praises of Christ, but they cannot gain their point, for as God can *out of stones raise up children unto Abraham*, so he can out of the mouths of those children perfect praise.

41. ¶ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42. Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. 43. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44. And shall



shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. 45. And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought, 46. Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves. 47. And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes, and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, 48. And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

The great ambassador from heaven is here making his publick entry into Jerusalem, not to be *respected* there but to be *rejected*; he knew what a nest of vipers he was throwing himself into; and yet see here two instances of his love to that place, and his concern for it.

First, The tears he shed for the approaching ruin of the city, ver. 41. *When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.* Probably it was when he was coming down the descent of the hill from the mount of Olives, where he had a full view of the city, the large extent of it, and the many stately structures in it, and his eye affected his heart, and his heart his eye again. See here, (1.) What a tender spirit Christ was of, we never read that he laughed, but we often find him in tears. In this very place his father David wept, and those that were with him, though he and they were *men of war*. There are cases, in which it is no disparagement to the stoutest of men to melt into tears. (2.) That Jesus Christ *wept* in the midst of his triumphs, *wept* when all about him were *rejoicing*, to show how little he was elevated with the applause and acclamation of the people. Thus he would teach us to *rejoice with trembling*, and *as though we rejoice not*. If providence do not stain the beauty of our triumphs, we may ourselves see cause to sully it with our sorrows. (3.) That he *wept over Jerusalem*. Note, There are cities to be wept over, and none to be more lamented than Jerusalem, that had been the holy city, and the joy of the whole earth, if it be degenerated. But why did Christ weep at the sight of Jerusalem, was it because yonder is the city in which I must be betrayed and bound, scourged and spit upon, condemned and crucified? No, he himself gives us the reason of his tears.

1. Jerusalem has not improved the day of her opportunities. He wept and said, *If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, if thou wouldest but yet know, while the gospel is preached to thee, and salvation offered thee by it; if thou wouldest at length bethink thyself, and understand the things that belong to thy peace, the making of thy peace with God, and the securing of thine own spiritual and eternal welfare; but thou dost not know the day of thy visitation,* ver. 44. The manner of speaking is abrupt; *if thou hadst known. O that thou hadst, so some take it; like that, O that my people had hearkened unto me,* Psal. lxxxix. 13. Isa. xlviii. 18. Or, *If thou hadst known,* well, like that of the fig-tree, Luke xiii. 9. how happy had it been for thee! Or, *If thou hadst known,* thou wouldest have wept for thyself, and I should have no occasion to weep for thee, but should have rejoiced rather; what he saith, lays all the blame of Jerusalem's impending ruin upon herself. Note, 1. There are things that *belong to our peace*, which we are all concerned to *know* and *understand*; the way how peace is made, the offers made of peace, the terms on which we may have the benefit of peace. The things that belong to our peace, are those things that relate to our present and future welfare; these we must know with application. 2. There is a *time of visitation*, when those things which *belong to our peace* may be *known by us*, and known to good purpose. When we enjoy the means of grace in great plenty, as powerfully preached to us, when the Spirit strives with us, and our own consciences are startled and awakened, then is the *time of visitation*, which we are concerned to improve. 3. Those that have long neglected the time of their visitation, if at length, if at last in this their day their eyes be opened, and they bethink themselves, all will be well yet. Those shall not be refused that come into the vineyard at the *eleventh hour*. 4. It is the amazing folly of multitudes that enjoy the means of grace, and it will be of fatal consequence to them, that they do not improve the day of their opportunities. The *things of their peace* are revealed to them, but are not minded or regarded by them; they *hide their eyes* from them, as if they were not worth taking notice of. They are not aware of the *accepted time*, and the *day of salvation*, and so let it slip, and perish through meer carelessness. None so blind as those that will not see, nor have any the things of their peace more certainly hid from their eyes, than those that turn their back upon them. 5. The sin and folly of those that persist in a contempt of gospel grace, is a great grief to the Lord Jesus, and should be so to us. He looks with weeping eyes upon lost souls that continue impenitent, and run headlong upon their own ruin; he had rather they would *turn and live*, than *go on and die*, for he is not willing any should perish.

2. Jerusalem cannot escape the day of her desolation. *The things of her peace* are now in a manner hid from her eyes; they will be shortly. Not but that after this the gospel was preached to them by the apostles, *all the house of Israel* were called to *know assuredly*, that Christ was their *peace*, Acts ii. 36. and multitudes were convinced and converted. But as to the body of the nation, and the leading part of it, it was sealed up under unbelief, God had *given them the spirit of slumber*, Rom. xi. 8. They were so prejudiced and enraged against the gospel, and those few that did embrace it then, nothing less than a miracle of divine grace (like that which converted Paul) would work upon them and it could not be expected such a miracle should be wrought and so they were justly given up to *judicial blindness* and hardness. The *peaceful things* are not *hid from the eyes* of particular persons but it is too late to think now of the nation of the Jews as *such* becoming a Christian nation, by embracing Christ.

And therefore they are marked for ruin, which Christ here foresees and foretels, as the certain consequence of their rejecting Christ. Note, Neglecting the great salvation, often brings temporal judgments upon a people; it did so upon Jerusalem in less than forty years after this; when all that Christ here foretold was exactly fulfilled. (1.) The Romans besieged the city, *cast a trench about it, compassed it round, and kept their inhabitants in on every side*. Josephus relates, that Titus run up a wall in a very short time, which surrounded the city, and cut off all hopes of escaping. (2.) They *laid it even with the ground*. Titus commanded his soldiers to *dig up the city*, and the whole compass of it was levelled, except three towers, see Josephus's history of the wars of the Jews, *Lib. v. cap. 27. Lib. vii. cap. 1.* Not only the city but the citizens were laid even with the ground, *thy children within thee*, by the cruel slaughters that were made of them. And there was scarce one stone left upon another. This was for their crucifying Christ, this was because they *knew not the day of their visitation*. Let other cities and nations take warning.

Secondly, The zeal he shewed for the present purifying of the temple. Though it must be destroyed ere long, it doth not therefore follow that no care must be taken of it in the mean time.

1. Christ cleared it of those who profaned it. He went straight to the temple, and began to cast out the buyers and sellers, ver. 45. Hereby (though he was represented as an enemy to the temple, and that was the crime laid to his charge before the high priest) he made it to appear, that he had a truer love for the temple than they had who had such a veneration for its corban, its treasury, as a sacred thing; for its purity was more its glory than its wealth was. Christ gave a reason for his dislodging the temple-merchants, ver. 46. The temple is a *house of prayer*, set apart for communion with God: the *buyers and sellers* make it a *den of thieves*, by the fraudulent bargains they made there; which was by no means to be suffered, for it would be a distraction to those who came there to pray.

2. He put it to the best use that ever it was put to, for he taught daily in the temple, ver. 47. Note, It is not enough that the corruptions of a church be purged out, but the preaching of the gospel must be encouraged. Now when Christ preached in the temple, Observe here,

1. How spiteful the church-rulers were against him; how industrious to seek an opportunity, or pretence rather, to do him a mischief, ver. 47. The chief priests and scribes and the chief of the people, i. e. the great Sanhedrin, that should have attended him, and summoned the people too to attend him, they sought to destroy him, and put him to death.

2. How respectful the common people were to him. They were very attentive to hear him; he spent most of his time in the country, and did not then preach in the temple, but when he did, the people paid him great respect; attended on his preaching with diligence, and let no opportunity slip of hearing him; attended to it with care, and would not lose a word. Some read it, *All the people as they heard him took his part*; and so it comes in very properly, as a reason why his enemies could not find what they might do against him; they saw the people ready to fly in their faces if they offered him any violence. Till his hour was come, his interest in the common people protected him: but when his hour was come, the chief priests influence upon the common people delivered him up.

## CHAP. XX.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Christ's answer to the chief priests' questions concerning his authority, ver. 1—8. (2.) The parable of the vineyard let out to the unjust and rebellious husbandmen, ver. 9—19. (3.) Christ's answer to the question proposed to him concerning the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar, ver. 20—26. (4.) His vindication of that great fundamental doctrine of the Jewish and Christian institutes, the resurrection of the dead, and the future state, from the foolish cavils of the Sadducees, ver. 27—38. (5.) His



(5.) *His puzzling the scribes with a question concerning the Messiah's being the son of David, ver. 39—44. (6.) The caution he gave his disciples to take heed of the scribes, ver. 45—47. All which passages we had before in Matthew and Mark, and therefore need not enlarge upon them here, unless on those particulars which we had not there.*

1. **A**N D it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him, with the elders, 2. And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority dost thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority? 3. And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: 4. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? 5. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, from heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not? 6. But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. 7. And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was. 8. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

In this passage of story nothing is added here to what we had in the other evangelists; but only in the first verse, where we are told,

1. That he was now *teaching the people in the temple, and preaching the gospel*. Note, Christ was a preacher of his own gospel. He not only *purchased* the salvation for us, but *published* it to us, which is a great confirmation of the truth of the gospel, and gives abundant encouragement to us to receive it, for it is a sign the heart of Christ was much upon it to have it received. This likewise puts an honour upon the preachers of the gospel, and upon their office and work, how much soever it is despised by a vain world. It puts an honour upon the *popular preachers* of the gospel; Christ condescended to the capacities of the *people* in preaching the gospel and *taught them*. And observe, when he was *preaching the gospel to the people*, he had this interruption given him. Note, Satan and his agents, do all they can to hinder the *preaching the gospel to the people*, for nothing weakens the interest of Satan's kingdom more.

2. That his enemies are here said to *come upon him*, ἐπέρσεν, that word is used only here, and it intimates, (1.) That they thought to surprize him with this question, they *came upon him* suddenly, hoping to catch him unprovided with an answer, as if this were not a thing he had himself thought of. (2.) That they thought to frighten him with this question. They *came upon him* in a body, with violence. But how could he be terrified with the *wrath of men*, when it was in his *own power to restrain it*, and make it turn to his praise. From this story itself we may learn,

1. That it is not to be thought strange, if even that which is evident to a demonstration, be disputed and called into question as a doubtful thing, by those that shut their eyes against the light. Christ's miracles plainly shewed by *what authority he did these things*, and sealed his commission, and yet this is that which is here *arraigned*.

2. Those that question Christ's authority, if they be but catechized themselves, in the plainest and most evident principles of religion, will have their folly made manifest unto all men. Christ answered these priests and scribes with a question concerning the baptism of John, a plain question which the meanest of the common people could answer, *was it from heaven or of men?* They all knew it was *from heaven*, there was nothing in it that had an earthly relish or tendency, but it was all heavenly and divine. And this question gravelled them, and run them aground, and served to shame them before the people.

3. Those that are governed by reputation and secular interest, it is not strange, if they imprison the plainest truths, and smother and stifle the strongest convictions, as these priests and scribes did, who, to save their credit, would not own that John's baptism was *from heaven*, and had no other reason why they did not say it was *of men*, but because they *feared the people*. What good can be expected from men of such a spirit?

4. Those that bury the knowledge they have, are justly denied further knowledge. They who knew the baptism of John to be from heaven, and would not believe in him, nor own their knowledge, it was just with Christ to refuse to give them an account of his authority, *ver. 7, 8*.

9. Then began he to speak to the people this parable: A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. 10. And at the season, he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. 11. And again he sent another servant, and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, No. xcii.

and sent him away empty. 12. And again he sent the third; and they wounded him also, and cast him out. 13. Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. 14. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. 15. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? 16. He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. 17. And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? 18. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone, shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. 19. ¶ And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoke this parable against them.

Christ spoke this parable against those who were resolved not to own his authority; though the evidence of it was never so full and convincing; and it comes in very seasonably, to shew that by questioning his authority, they forfeited their own. Their disowning the lord of their vineyard, was a defeasance of their lease of the vineyard, and a giving up all their title.

1. The parable has nothing added here to what we had before in Matthew and Mark. The scope of it is to shew, that the Jewish nation, by persecuting the prophets, and at length Christ himself, had provoked God to take away from them all their church privileges, and to abandon them to ruin. It teacheth us,

1. That those who enjoy the privileges of the visible church, are as tenants and farmers that have a vineyard to look after, and rents to pay for it. God by setting up revealed religion and instituted orders in the world, hath planted a vineyard, which he lets out to those people among whom his tabernacle is, *ver. 9*.

And they have *vineyard work* to do, needful and constant work, but pleasant and profitable. Whereas man was for sin condemned to *till the ground*; they that have a place in the church, are restored to that which was Adam's work in innocency, to *dress the garden*, and to keep it, for the church is a paradise, and Christ the tree of life in it. They have also *vineyard fruits* to present to the lord of the vineyard. There are rents to be paid, and services to be done, which, though bearing no proportion to the value of the premises, yet must be *done*, and must be *paid*.

2. That the work of God's ministers, is to call upon those that enjoy the privileges of the church, to *bring forth fruit* accordingly. They are God's rent-gatherers, to put the husbandmen in mind of their arrears, or rather to put them in mind that they have a landlord, who expects to hear from them, and to receive some acknowledgment of their dependence on him, and obligations to him, *ver. 10*. The Old Testament prophets, were sent on this errand to the Jewish church, to demand from them the duty and obedience they owed to God.

3. It has often been the lot of God's faithful servants to be wretchedly abused by his own tenants; they have been *beaten and treated shamefully* by those that resolved to *send them empty* away. They that are resolved not to do their duty to God, cannot bear to be called upon to do it. Some of the best men in the world, have had the hardest usage from it, for their best services.

4. God sent his Son into the world, to carry on the same work that the prophets were employed in, to *gather the fruits of the vineyard* for God, and one would have thought he should have been revered and received. The prophets spoke as *servants*, *Thus saith the Lord*; but Christ as a *son*, among his own, *Verily I say unto you*. Putting such an honour as this upon them, to send him, one would have thought, should have won upon them.

5. Those that reject Christ's ministers, would reject Christ himself, if he should come to them; for it has been tried and found that the persecutors and murderers of his servants the prophets, were the persecutors and murderers of him himself. They said, *This is the heir, come let us kill him*. When they slew the servants, there were other servants sent, but if we can but be the death of the son, there is never another son to be sent, and then we shall be no longer molested with these demands; we may have a quiet possession of the vineyard for ourselves. The scribes and Pharisees promised themselves, that if they could but get Christ out of the way, they should for ever ride masters in the Jewish church; and therefore they took that bold step, they *cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him*.

6. The putting of Christ to death filled up the measure of the Jewish iniquity, and brought upon them ruin without remedy. No other could be expected but that God should *destroy those wicked husbandmen*. They began in *not paying their rent*, but then proceeded to beat and kill the servants, and at length their young master himself. Note, Those that live in the neglect of their



their duty to God, know not what degrees of sin and destruction they are running themselves into.

2. To the application of the parable is added here, which we had not before, their deprecation of the doom included in it, *ver. 16. When they heard it, they said, God forbid, μὴ γένοιτο. Let not this be done*, so it should be read; though they could not but own, that for such a sin, such a punishment was just, and what might be expected, yet they could not bear to hear of it. Note, It is an instance of the folly and stupidity of sinners, that they proceed and persevere in their sinful ways, though at the same time they have a foresight and dread of the destruction that is at the end of those ways. And see what a cheat they put upon themselves to think to avoid it by a cold *God forbid*, when they do nothing towards the preventing of it; but will this make the threatening of none effect? No, they shall know whose word shall stand, God's or theirs.

Now observe what Christ said in answer to this childish deprecation of their ruin. (1.) He *beheld them*. That is taken notice of only by this evangelist, *ver. 17. He looked upon them* with pity and compassion, grieved to see them cheat themselves thus in their own ruin. He *beheld them* to see if they would blush at their own folly, or if he could discern in their countenances any shew of relenting. (2.) He referred them to the scripture, *What is this then that is written?* How can you escape the judgment of God, when you cannot prevent the exaltation of him whom you despise and reject? The word of God hath said it, *That the stone which the builders rejected, is become the head of the corner.* The Lord Jesus will be exalted to the Father's right hand, he has all judgment and all power committed to him, he is the corner-stone, and top-stone of the church, and if so, his enemies can expect no other but to be destroyed: for even those that slight him, that stumble at him, and are offended in him, they *shall be broken*, it will be their ruin; but those that not only reject him, but hate and persecute him, as the Jews did, he will fall upon them, and crush them to pieces, will *grind them to powder*. The condemnation of spiteful persecutors will be much forer than that of careless unbelievers.

Lastly, We are told how the chief priests and scribes were exasperated by this parable, *ver. 19. They perceived that he spoke this parable against them*, and so he did. A guilty conscience needs no accuser; but they instead of yielding to the conviction of conscience, fell into a rage at him, who awakened that sleeping lion in their bosoms, and *sought to lay hands on him*. Their corruptions rebelled against their convictions, and got the victory. And it was because they had not any fear of God, or of his wrath, before their eyes, but only because they *feared the people*, that they did not now fly in his face, and take him by the throat. They were just ready to make his words good; *This is the heir, come let us kill him*. Note, When the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil, the fairest warnings both of the sin they are about to commit, and of the consequences of it, make no impression upon them. Christ tells them, that instead of *killing the Son of God*, they would *kill him*, upon which they should have said, *What, is thy servant a dog?* But they do in effect say this, and so we will; have at him now. And though they deprecate the punishment of the sin, in the next breath they are projecting the commission of it.

20. And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governour. 21. And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly. 22. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cesar, or no? 23. But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? 24. Shew me a penny: whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cessars. 25. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cesar the things which be Cessars, and unto God the things which be Gods. 26. And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

We have here Christ's evading a snare, which his enemies laid for him, by proposing a question to him about tribute. We had this passage before both in Matthew and Mark. Here is,

1. The mischief designed him, and that is more fully related here than before. The plot was to *deliver him unto the power and authority of the governour*, *ver. 20. They could not themselves put him to death, by course of law, nor otherwise than by a popular tumult*, which they could not depend upon. And since they cannot be his judges, they will willingly condescend to be his prosecutors and accusers, and will themselves *inform* against him. They hoped to gain their point, if they could but incense the governour against him. Note, It has been the common artifice of persecuting church rulers, to make the secular powers

the tools of their malice, and oblige the *kings of the earth* to do their drudgery, who if they had not been intigated, would have let their neighbours live quietly by them, as Pilate did Christ till the chief priests and the scribes presented Christ to him. But thus Christ's word must be fulfilled by their cursed politicks, that he should be *delivered into the hands of the Gentiles*.

2. The persons they employed. Matthew and Mark told us they were disciples of the Pharisees, with some Herodians: Here it is added, that they were *spies, which should feign themselves just men*. Note, It is no new thing for *ill men* to feign themselves *just men*, and to cover the most wicked projects with most specious and plausible pretences. The devil can *transform himself into an angel of light*, and a Pharisee appear in the garb, and speak the language of a disciple of Christ. A spy must go in disguise. These spies must take on them to have a value for Christ's judgment, and to depend upon it as an oracle, and therefore must desire his advice in a case of conscience. Note, Ministers are concerned to stand upon their guard, against some that feign themselves to be *just men*, and to be *wise as serpents*, when they are in the midst of a *generation of vipers and scorpions*.

3. The question they proposed, with which they hoped to ensnare him. (1.) Their preface is very courtly, *Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly*, *ver. 21. Thus they thought to flatter him into an incautious freedom and openness with them, and so to gain their point. They that are proud, and love to be commended, will be brought to do any thing for those that will but flatter them, and speak them fair, but they were much mistaken, who thought thus to impose upon the humble Jesus. He was not pleased with the testimony of such hypocrites, nor thought himself honoured by it. It is true, that he *accepts not the person of any*, but it is as true, that he knows the hearts of all, and knew theirs, and the *seven abominations* that were there, though they *spoke fair*. It was certain that he *taught the way of God truly*; but he knew that they were unworthy to be taught by him, who came to *take hold of his words*, not to be *taken hold of* by them. 2. Their case is very nice: Is it lawful for us, (that is added here in Luke) *to give tribute to Cesar?* for us Jews, us the freeborn seed of Abraham, us that pay the Lord's tribute, may we give tribute to Cesar? Their pride and covetousness made them loth to pay taxes, and then they would have it a question, whether it was lawful or no? Now if Christ should say *it was lawful*, the people would take it ill, who expected that he who set up to be the Messiah should in the first place free them from the Roman yoke, and stand by them in denying tribute to Cesar: But if he should say *it was not lawful*, as they expected he would (for if he had not been of that mind, they thought he could not have been so much the darling of the people as he was) then they should have something to accuse him of to the governour, which was what they wanted.*

4. His evading of the snare which they laid for him. He *perceived their craftiness*, *ver. 23. Note, Those that are most crafty in their designs against Christ and his gospel, cannot with all their art conceal them from his cognizance. He can see through the most political disguises, and so break through the most dangerous snare; for *surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird*. He did not give them a direct answer, but reproved them for offering to impose upon him, *Why tempt ye me?* and called for a *piece of money*, current money with the merchants; *shew me a penny*, and asked them whose money it was; whose stamp it bore? Who coined it? They owned, it is Cesar's money, why then saith Christ, you should first have asked whether it was lawful to *pay and receive Cesar's money* among yourselves, and to admit that to be the instrument of your commerce: But you having granted that by a common consent, you are concluded by your own act, and no doubt you ought to give tribute to him, who furnished you with this convenience for your trade, protects you in it, and lends you the sanction of his authority; for the value of your money. You must therefore *render to Cesar, the things that are Cesar's*. In civil things you ought to submit to the civil powers, and so if Cesar protects you in your civil rights, by laws, and the administration of justice, you ought to *pay him tribute*; but in sacred things, God only is your king, you are not bound to be of Cesar's religion; you must *render to God the things that are God's*, must worship and adore him only, and not any golden image that Cesar sets up; and we must worship and adore him in such way as he has appointed, and not according to the inventions of Cesar. It is God only that has authority to say, *My son, give me thy heart*.*

5. The confusion they were hereby put into, *ver. 26. (1.) The snare is broke. They could not take hold of his words before the people. They could not fasten upon any thing wherewith to incense either the governour or the people against him. (2.) Christ is honoured; even the wrath of man is made to praise him. They marvelled at his answer, it was so discreet and unexceptionable, and such an evidence of that wisdom and sincerity which make the face to shine. (3.) Their mouths are stopped. They held their peace. They had nothing to object, and durst ask him nothing else, lest he should shame and expose them.*



27. ¶ Then came to him certain of the Sadducees (which deny that there is any resurrection) and they asked him, 28. Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any mans brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 29. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. 30. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. 31. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also. And they left no children, and died. 32. Last of all the woman died also. 33. Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. 34. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: 35. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage. 36. Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. 37. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

This discourse with the Sadducees we had before, just as it is here, only that the description Christ gives of the future state, is somewhat more full and large here. Observe here,

1. That in every age there have been men of corrupt minds, that have endeavoured to subvert the fundamental principles of revealed religion. As there are deists now, who call themselves free-thinkers, but are really false-thinkers; so there were Sadducees in our Saviour's time, that bantered the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come, though they were plainly revealed in the Old Testament, and were articles of the Jewish faith. The Sadducees deny that *there is any resurrection, any future state*; so *ἀνάστασις*, may signify; not only no return of the body to life, but no continuance of the soul in life; no world of spirits, no state of recompence and retribution for what was done in the body. Take away this, and all religion falls to the ground.

2. It is common for those that design to undermine any truth of God, to perplex it, and load it with difficulties: So those Sadducees here did, when they would weaken peoples faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, they put a question upon the supposition of it, which they thought could not be answered either way to satisfaction. The case, perhaps, was matter of fact, however it might be so of a woman that had *seven husbands*: Now in the resurrection, *whose wife shall she be?* Whereas it was not at all material whose she was, for when death puts an end to that relation, it is not to be resumed again.

3. There is a great deal of difference between the state of the children of men on earth, and that of the children of God in heaven; a vast unlikeness between *this world*, and *that world*; and we wrong ourselves, and wrong the truth of Christ, when we form our notions of that world of spirits, by our present enjoyments in this world of sense.

1. The children of men in this world, *marry, and are given in marriage*, *οἱ τὸ αἰῶνος τέττε*. The children of this age, this generation, both good and bad, marry themselves, and give their children in marriage. Much of our business in this world, is to raise and build up families, and to provide for them: Much of our pleasure in this world is our relations, our wives, and children; nature inclines to it: Marriage is instituted for the comfort of human life here in this state, where we carry bodies about with us. It is likewise a remedy against fornication, that natural desires might not become brutal, but be under direction and control. The children of this world are dying and going off the stage, and therefore they marry, and give their children in marriage, that they may furnish the world of mankind with needful recruits, that as one generation passeth away, another may come, and that they may have some of their own offspring to leave the fruit of their labours to, especially that the chosen of God in future ages may be introduced, for it is a *godly seed* that is sought by marriage, Mal. ii. 15. A seed to serve the Lord, that shall be a *generation to him*.

2. The world to come is quite another thing; it is called *that world*, by way of emphasis and eminency. Note, There are more worlds than one; a present miserable world, and a future invisible world; and it is the concern of every one of us to compare worlds; *this world*, and *that world*, and give the preference in our thoughts and cares to that which deserves it. Now observe,

1. Who shall be the inhabitants of *that world*; they that shall be *accounted worthy to obtain it*, i. e. that are interested in Christ's merit, who *purchased it for us*, and have a holy *meetness* for it wrought in them by the Spirit, whose business it is to prepare us

for it. They have not a *legal* worthiness upon the account of any thing in them, or done by them, but an *evangelical* worthiness upon the account of the inestimable price which Christ paid for the *redemption of the purchased possession*. It is a worthiness imputed, by which we are glorified, as well as a righteousness imputed, by which we are justified, καὶ ἀξιοσύνης; they are *made agreeable to that world*. The disagreeableness that there is in the corrupt nature, it is taken away, and the dispositions of the soul are, by the grace of God, conformed to that state. They are by grace made and *counted worthy to obtain that world*, it intimates some *difficulty* in reaching after it, and danger of coming short. We must *so run*, as that we may obtain. They shall obtain the *resurrection from the dead*, i. e. the blessed resurrection; for that of *condemnation*, as Christ calls it, John v. 29. is rather a resurrection to death, a second death; an eternal death, than from death.

2. What shall be the happy state of the inhabitants of that world, we cannot conceive or express it, 1 Cor. ii. 9. See what Christ here saith of it.

1. They *neither marry, nor are given in marriage*. Those that are entered into the joy of their Lord, are entirely taken up with that, and need not the joy of the bridegroom in his bride. The love in that world of love is all seraphick, and such as eclipseth and loseth the purest and most pleasing loves we entertain ourselves with, in this world of sense, where the body itself shall be a spiritual body, the delights of sense are all vanished. And where there is a perfection of holiness, there is no occasion for marriage, as a preservative from sin; into that *new Jerusalem* there enters nothing that defiles.

2. They cannot *die any more*; and this comes in as a reason why they do not marry. In this dying world there must be marriage, or order to the filling up of the vacancies made by death; but where there are no burials, there needs no weddings. This crowns the comfort of that world, that there is no more death there, which sullies all the beauty, and damps all the comfort of this world. Here death reigns, but thence it is for ever excluded.

3. They are *equal unto the angels*. In the other evangelists it was said, they are *as the angels*, ὡς ἀγγέλοι, but here they are said to be *equal to the angels*, ἰσάγγελοι, *angels peers*; they have a glory and bliss no way inferior to that of the holy angels: They shall see the same sight, be employed in the same work, and share in the same joys with the holy angels. Saints, when they come to heaven, shall be *naturalized*, and though by nature strangers, yet having *obtained this freedom with a great sum*, which Christ paid for them, they have in all respects equal privileges with them that were free born, the angels that are the natives, and aborigines of that country. They shall be companions with the angels, and converse with those blessed spirits that love them dearly, and to an innumerable company, of whom they are now come in faith, hope, and love.

4. They are *the children of God*, and so they are as the angels, who are called the *sons of God*: In the *inheritance of sons*, the *adoption of sons* will be completed. Hence believers are said to *wait for the adoption, even the redemption of the body*, Rom. viii. 23. For till the body is redeemed from the grave, the adoption is not completed. *Now are we the sons of God*, 1 Joh. iii. 2. We have the nature and disposition of sons, but that will not be *perfected* till we come to heaven.

5. They are *the children of the resurrection*, i. e. they are made capable of the employments and enjoyments of the future state; they are *born to that world*, belong to that family, had their education for it here, and shall there have their inheritance in it. They are the *children of God*, being the *children of the resurrection*. Note, God owns those only for his children, that are the children of the resurrection, that are born from above, are allied to the world of spirits, and prepared for that world, who are the children of that family.

4. It is an undoubted truth, that there is another life after this, and there were eminent discoveries made of this truth, in the early ages of the church, ver. 37, 38. *Moses shewed this, as it was shewed to Moses at the bush*, and he hath shewed it to us, when he calleth the Lord as the Lord calleth himself, the *God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were then *dead* as to our world, they were departed out of it many years before, and their bodies were turned into dust in the cave of Macpelah; how then could God say, not *I was*, but *I am the God of Abraham*? It is absurd that the living God and fountain of life, should continue related to them as their God, if there were no more of them in being but what lay in that cave, undistinguished from common dust; we must therefore conclude, that they were then in being in another world, for *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*. Luke here adds, *for lives unto him*, i. e. all that like them are true believers, though they are dead, yet they *do live*, their souls which *return to God that gave them*, Eccl. xii. 7. live to him as the Father of spirits: And their bodies shall live again at the end of time, by the power of God; for he calleth things that are not, as though they were, because he is the God that *quickens the dead*, Rom. iv. 17. But there is more in it yet; when God called himself *the God of these patriarchs*, he meant that he was their felicity and portion



portion, a God all-sufficient to them, Gen. xvii. 1. their exceeding great reward, Gen. xv. 1. Now it is plain by their story, that he never did that for them in this world, which would answer the true intent and full extent of that great undertaking, and therefore there must be another life after this, in which he will do that for them, as will amount to a discharge in full of that promise, that he would be to them a God; which he is well able to do, for all live to him, and he has wherewithal to make every soul happy that lives to him; enough for all, enough for each.

39. ¶ Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. 40. And after that, they durst not ask him any question at all. 41. And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is Davids son? 42. And David himself saith in the book of psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 43. Till I make thine enemies thy foot-stool. 44. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son? 45. ¶ Then in the audience of all the people, he said unto his disciples, 46. Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; 47. Which devour widows houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

The scribes were *students* in the law, and *expofitors* of it to the people; men in reputation for wisdom and honour, the generality of them were enemies to Christ and his gospel; now here we have some of them attending him, and four things we have in these verses concerning them, which we had before.

1. We have them here commending the reply which Christ made to the Sadducees, concerning the resurrection, ver. 39. *Certain of the scribes said, Master, thou hast well said.* Christ had the testimony of his adversaries, that he said well; and therefore the scribes were his enemies, because he would not conform to the traditions of the elders; but yet when he vindicated the fundamental practices of religion, and appeared in defence of them, even the scribes commended his performance, and owned he said well. Many that call themselves Christians, come short even of that spirit.

2. We have them here struck with an awe of Christ, and of his wisdom and authority, ver. 40. *They durst not ask him any questions at all,* because they saw that he was too hard for all that contended with him. His own disciples, though weak, yet being willing to receive his doctrine, durst ask him any question; but the Sadducees, who contradicted and cavilled at his doctrine, durst ask him none.

3. We have them here puzzled and run aground with a question concerning the Messiah, ver. 41. It was plain by many scriptures, that Christ was to be the *Son of David*; even the blind man knew that, chap. xviii. 39. and yet it was plain, in that David called the Messiah *his Lord*, ver. 42, 43, his owner, and ruler, and benefactor, *The Lord said to my Lord*; God said it to the Messiah, *Pfal. cx. 1.* Now if he be *his Son*, why doth he call him *his Lord*? If he be *his Lord*, why do we call him *his Son*? This he left them to consider of, but they could not reconcile his seeming contradiction; thanks be to God we can; that Christ as God was David's Lord, but Christ as man, was David's Son: He was both the *root* and the *offspring of David*, Rev. xxii. 16. By his *human nature* he was the *offspring of David*, a branch of his family; by his *divine nature* he was the *root of David*, from whom he had his being and life, and all the supplies of grace.

4. We have them here described in their black characters, and a publick caution given to the disciples to take heed of them, ver. 45, 46, 47. This we had just as it is here, *Mark xii. 38.* and more largely, *Matt. xxiii.* Christ bid his disciples *beware of the scribes*, i. e. 1. Take heed of being drawn into sin by them, of learning their way, and going into their measures; beware of such a spirit as they are governed by. Be not you such in the Christian church, as they are in the Jewish church. 2. Take heed of being brought into trouble by them; in the same sense that he had said, *Matt. x. 17.* *Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils*; beware of the scribes, for they do so. Beware of them, for,

1. They are proud and haughty; they desire to walk about the streets in long robes, as those that are above business, for men of business went with their loins girt up, and as those that take state, and take place. *Cedant arma togæ.* They loved in their hearts to have people make their honours to them in the markets, that many might see what respect was paid them; and were very proud of the precedency that was given them in all places of concourse. They loved the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts, and when they were placed in them, looked upon themselves with great conceit, and upon all about them with a great contempt. *I sit as a queen.*

2. They are covetous and oppressive, and make their religion a cloke and cover for it. They devour widows houses, get their estates into their hands, and then by some trick or other make them their own; or, they live upon them, and eat up what they have. And widows are an easy prey to them, because they are apt to be deluded by their specious pretences; for a shew they make long prayers, perhaps long prayers with the widows when they are in sorrow, as if they had not only a piteous but a pious concern for them, and thus endeavour to ingratiate themselves with them, and get their money and effects into their hands. Such devout men sure may be trusted with untold gold; but they will give such an account of it as they think fit.

Christ reads them their doom in a few words, *These shall receive a more abundant judgment*; a double damnation, both for their abuse of the poor widows, whose houses they devoured; and for their abuse of religion, and particularly of prayer, which they had made use of, as a pretence for the more plausible and effectual carrying on of their worldly and wicked projects; for dissembling piety is double iniquity.

## C H A P. XXI.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The notice Christ took, and the approbation he gave of a poor widow that cast two mites into the treasury, ver. 1—4. (2.) A prediction of future events, in answer to his disciples enquiries concerning them, ver. 5—7. 1. Of what should happen between, and the destruction of Jerusalem, false christs arising, bloody wars and persecutions of Christ's followers, ver. 8—19. 2. Of that destruction itself, ver. 20—24. 3. Of the second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world, under the type and figure of that, ver. 25—33. (3.) A practical application of this by way of caution and counsel, ver. 34—36. And an account of Christ's preaching, and the peoples attendance on it, ver. 37, 38.

1. AND he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. 2. And he saw also a certain poor widow, casting in thither two mites. 3. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all. 4. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

This short passage of story we had before in Mark. It is thus recorded twice to teach us,

1. That charity to the poor is a main matter in religion; our Lord Jesus took all occasions to commend it, and recommend it. He had just mentioned the barbarity of the scribes that devoured poor widows, chap. xx. and perhaps this is designed as an aggravation of it, that the poor widows were the best benefactors to the publick funds which the scribes had the disposal of.

2. That Jesus Christ has his eye upon us, to observe what we give to the poor, and what we contribute to works of piety and charity. Christ, though intent upon his preaching, looked up to see what gifts were cast into the treasury, ver. 1. He observes whether we give largely and liberally, in proportion to what we have, and whether we be sneaking and paultry in it; nay, his eye goes further, he observes whether we give charitably, and with a willing mind, or grudgingly and with reluctance. This should make us afraid of coming short of our duty in this matter; men may be deceived with excuses which Christ knows to be frivolous; and this should encourage us to be abundant in it, without desiring that men should know it, it is enough that Christ doth, he seeth in secret, and will reward openly.

3. That Christ observes and accepts the charity of the poor in a particular manner. Those that have nothing to give, may yet do a great deal in charity, by ministering to the poor, and helping them, and begging for them, that cannot help themselves, or beg for themselves: But here was one that was herself poor, and yet gave what little she had to the treasury. It was but two mites, which make a farthing; but Christ magnified it as a piece of charity exceeding all the rest, *She has cast in more than they all.* Christ doth not blame her for indiscretion, in giving what she wanted herself, nor for vanity in giving among the rich to the treasury; but commended her liberality, and her willingness to part with what little she had for the glory of God; which proceeded from a belief of, and dependence upon, God's providence, to take care of her. *Jehovah jireh*, the Lord will provide.

4. That whatever may be called the offerings of God, we ought to have a respect for, and to our power, yea, and beyond our power, to contribute cheerfully to. These have cast in unto the offerings of God. What is given to the support of the ministry and



and the gospel, to the spreading and propagating of religion, the education of youth, the release of prisoners, the relief of widows and strangers, and the maintenance of poor families, is given to the *offerings of God*, and it shall be so accepted and recompensed.

5. ¶ And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, 6. *As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* 7. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign *will there be* when these things shall come to pass? 8. And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ*; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. 9. But when ye shall hear of wars, and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not by and by. 10. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; 11. And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven. 12. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my names sake. 13. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. 14. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer. 15. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, nor resist. 16. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. 17. And ye shall be hated of all men for my names sake. 18. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. 19. In your patience possess ye your souls.

See here, (1.) With what admiration some spake of the external pomp and magnificence of the temple, and they were some of Christ's own disciples too; and they took notice of it to him, *how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts*, ver. 5. The outside was built up with goodly stones, and within it was beautified and enriched with the *resents* that were offered up for that purpose, and were *hung up* in it. They thought their Master should be as much affected with those things as they were, and should as much regret the destruction of them as they did. When we *speak of the temple*, it should be of the presence of God in it, and of the ordinances of God administered in it, and the communion which his people there have with him, it is a poor thing, when we speak of the church, to let our discourse dwell upon its pomps and revenues, and the dignities and powers of its officers and rulers; for the king's daughter is all *glorious within*.

(2.) With what contempt Christ spoke of them, and with what assurance of their being all made desolate very shortly, ver. 6. *As for those things which you behold*, those dear things which you are so much in love with, *behold, the days will come*, and some now living may live to see them, *in which there shall not be left one stone upon another*. This building which seems so beautiful, that, one would think, none could for pity pull it down, and which seems so strong, that, one would think, none should be able to pull it down, yet shall be utterly ruined; and this shall be done, as soon as ever the spiritual temple of the gospel church (the substance of that shadow) begins to flourish in the world. Did we by faith foresee the blasting and withering of all external glory, we should not set our hearts upon it, as those do that cannot see, or will not look so far before them.

(3.) With what curiosity those about him enquire, concerning the time when this great desolation should be, ver. 7. *Master, when shall these things be?* It is natural to us to covet to know future things, and the time of them, which *it is not for us to know*; when we are more concerned to ask what is our duty in the prospect of these things, and how we may prepare for them. This it is for us to know. They enquire *what sign there shall be, when these things shall come to pass*. They ask not for a present sign to confirm the prediction itself, and to induce them to believe it, Christ's word was enough for that; but what the future signs will be, of the approaching accomplishment of the prediction, by which they may be put in mind of it. These *signs of the times* Christ had taught them to observe.

(4.) With what clearness and fulness Christ answers their enquiries, as far as was necessary to direct them in their duty; for all knowledge is desirable, as far as it is in order to practice.

No. xcii.

First, They must expect to hear of false christs, and false prophets, appearing, and false prophecies given out, ver. 8. *many shall come in my name*, he doth not mean *in the name of Jesus*, though there were some deceivers who pretended commissions from him, as *Acts* xix. 13. but usurping the title and character of the Messiah. Many pretended to be the deliverers of the Jewish church and nation from the Romans, and to fix the time when the deliverance should be wrought, by which multitudes are drawn into a snare to their ruin. They shall say, *ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι*, *That I am he*, or, *I am*, as if they would assume that incommunicable name of God, by which he made himself known, when he came to deliver Israel out of Egypt, *I am*; and to encourage people to follow them, they added, *the time draws near*, when the kingdom shall be restored to Israel, and if they will follow him, they shall share in it.

Now as to this, he gives them a needful caution, 1. *Take heed that ye be not deceived*; do not you imagine that I shall myself come again in external glory, to take possession of the throne of kingdoms. No, you must not expect any such thing, for my kingdom is not of this world. When they asked solicitously and eagerly, *Master, when shall these things be?* The first word Christ said was, *Take heed that ye be not deceived*. Note, Those that are most *inquisitive* in the things of God (though it is very good to be so) yet are in most danger of being imposed upon, and have most need to be upon their guard. 2. *Go ye not after them*, you know the Messiah is come, and you are not to look for any other; and therefore do not so much as hearken after them, nor have any thing to do with them. If we are sure that Jesus is the Christ, and his doctrine is the *gospel of God*, we must be deaf to all intimations of another christ, and another gospel.

Secondly, They must expect to hear of great commotions in the nations, and many terrible judgments inflicted upon the Jews, and their neighbours. (1.) There shall be *bloody war*, ver. 10. *Nation shall rise against nation*; one part of the Jewish nation against another, or rather the whole against the Romans. Encouraged by the false christs, they shall wickedly endeavour to throw off the Roman yoke, by taking up arms against the Roman powers, when they had rejected the liberty with which Christ would have made them free, they were left to themselves, to grasp at their civil liberty, in ways that were *sinful*, and therefore could not be *successful*. (2.) There shall be *earthquakes*, great earthquakes, *in divers places*, which shall not only frighten people, but destroy towns and houses, and bury many in the ruins of them. (3.) There shall be *famines* and *pestilences*, the common effects of war, which destroy the fruits of the earth, and by exposing men to ill weather, and reducing men to ill diet, occasions infectious diseases. God has various ways of punishing a provoking people. The four sorts of judgments, which the Old Testament prophets so often speak of, are threatened by the New Testament prophets too, for though spiritual judgments are more commonly inflicted in gospel times, yet God makes use of temporal judgments also. (4.) There shall be *fearful sights*, and *great signs from heaven*, uncommon appearances in the clouds, comets, and blazing stars, which frighten the ordinary sort of beholders, and have always been looked upon as *ominous*, and *portending something bad*.

Now as to these, the caution he gives them is, *Be not terrified*. Others will be frightened at them, but be not you frightened, ver. 9. As to the *fearful sights*, let not them be *fearful* to you, who look above the visible heavens, to the throne of God's government in the highest heavens. *Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven*, for the heathen are dismayed at them, Jer. x. 2. And as to the *famines* and *pestilences*, you fall into the hands of God, who has promised to those who are his, that *in the days of famine they shall be satisfied*, and that he will keep them from the *noisome pestilence*; trust therefore in him, and *be not afraid*. Nay, when you hear of wars, when without are fightings, and within are fears, yet then *be not you terrified*; you know the worst that any of these judgments can do you, and therefore be not afraid of them; for, (1.) It is your interest to *make the best of that which is*, for all your fears cannot alter it, *these things must first come to pass*, there is no remedy, it will be your wisdom to make yourselves easy, by accommodating yourselves to them. (2.) There is *worse behind*; flatter not yourselves with a fancy that you will soon see an end of these troubles, no, not so soon as you think of, *the end is not by and by*, not suddenly. *Be not terrified*, for if you begin so quickly to be discouraged, how will you bear up under what is yet before you?

Thirdly, They must expect to be themselves for *signs* and *wonders* in Israel; their being *persecuted* would be a prognostick of the destruction of the city and temple, which he had now foretold. Nay, this should be the *first* sign of their ruin coming. *Before all these they shall lay their hands on you*. The judgment shall begin at the house of God; you must smart first, for warning to them, that if they have any consideration they may consider, *if this be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?* see 1 *Pet.* iv. 17, 18. But that is not all; this must be considered, not only as the *suffering* of the *persecuted*, but as the *sin* of the *persecution*: *Before* God's judgments are brought upon them, they shall fill up the measure of their iniquity, by *laying their hands on you*. Note, The ruin of a people is always introduced



by their sin; and nothing introduces a surer and sorer ruin, than the sin of persecution. This is a *sign* that God's wrath is coming upon a people to the uttermost, when their *wrath* against the servants of God *comes to the uttermost*.

Now as to this,

1. Christ tells them what hard things they should suffer for his name's sake, much to the same purpose with what he had told them, when he first called them to follow him, *Matt. x.* They should know the wages of it, that they might *sit down and count the cost*. St. Paul, who was the greatest labourer and sufferer of them all, not being now among them, was told by himself what *great things he should suffer for Christ's name's sake*, *Acts ix. 16.* so necessary is it, that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, should count upon persecution. The Christians having themselves been originally Jews, and still retaining an equal veneration with them for the Old Testament, and all the essentials of their religion, and differing only in ceremony, might expect fair quarter with them; but Christ bids them not expect it, no, they shall be the most forward to *persecute you*. (1.) They shall use their own church-power against you, *they shall deliver you up to the synagogues*, to be scourged there; and stigmatized with their *anathemas*. (2.) They shall incense the magistrates against you; they shall *deliver you into prisons*, that you may be *brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake*, and be punished by them. (3.) Your own relations will betray you, *ver. 16. your parents, brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends*; so that you will not know whom to put a confidence in, or where to be safe. (4.) Your religion will be made a capital crime, and you will be called to *resist unto blood*; *some of you shall they cause to be put to death*, so far must you be from expecting honour and wealth, that you must expect nothing but death in its most frightful shapes, death in all its dreadful pomp. Nay, (5.) *You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake*, this is worse than death itself, and was fulfilled when the apostles were not only *appointed to death*, but made a *spectacle to the world*, and counted as the *filth of the world*, and the *off-scouring of all things*, which every body loaths, *1 Cor. iv. 9, 13.* They were hated of *all men*, i. e. of all ill men; who could not bear the light of the gospel, because it discovered their evil deeds, and therefore hate those who brought in that light, flew in their faces, and would have pulled them to pieces. The wicked world that hated to be reformed, hated Christ the great reformer, and all that were his, for his sake. The rulers of the Jewish church, knowing very well, that if the gospel obtained among the Jews, their usurped abused power was at an end, raised all their forces against it, put it into an ill name; filled peoples mind with prejudices against it, and so made the preachers and professors of it odious to the mob.

2. He encourageth them to bear up under their trials, and to go on in their work, notwithstanding the opposition they would meet with.

1. God will bring glory, both to himself and them, out of their sufferings, *ver. 13. It shall turn to you for a testimony*. Your being set up thus for a mark, and publicly *persecuted*, will make you, and your doctrine and miracles, the more taken notice of, and enquired into, your being brought *before kings and rulers* will give you an opportunity of preaching the gospel to them, who otherwise would never have come within hearing of it; your suffering such severe things, and being so hated by this worst of men, of the most vicious lives, will be a testimony that you are good, else you would not have such ill men your enemies, your courage, and cheerfulness, and constancy, under your sufferings, will be a testimony for you, that you believe what you preach, and that you are supported by a divine power, and the Spirit of God and glory rests upon you.

2. God will stand by you, and own you, and assist you in your trials; you are his advocates, and you shall be well furnished with instructions, *ver. 14, 15.* Instead of setting your hearts on work to contrive an answer to informations, indictments, articles, accusations, and interrogatories, that will be exhibited against you in the ecclesiastical and civil courts, on the contrary, *settle it in your hearts*, impress it upon them, take pains with them, to persuade them *not to meditate before, what ye shall answer*, i. e. do not depend upon your own wit and ingenuity, your own prudence and policy, and do not *distrust* or *despair*, of the immediate and extraordinary aids of the divine grace. Think not to bring yourselves off in the cause of Christ, as you would in a cause of your own, by your own parts and application, with the common assistance of divine providence, but promise yourselves, for I promise you, the special assistance of divine grace; *I will give you a mouth and wisdom*. This proves Christ to be God, for it is God's prerogative to *give wisdom*, and he it is that *made man's mouth*. Note, (1.) A *mouth and wisdom* together completely fit a man both for services and sufferings. *Wisdom* to know what to say, and a *mouth* wherewith to say it, as it should be said. It is a great happiness to have both *matter and words*, wherewith to honour God, and do good; to have in the mind a *store-house* well furnished with things *new and old*, and a *door of utterance*, by which to *bring them forth*. (2.) Those that plead Christ's cause, may depend upon him to give them a *mouth and wisdom*, which way soever they are called to plead it, especially when they are brought

before magistrates for his name's sake. It is not said, he will send an angel from heaven to answer for them, though he could do that, but he will give them a *mouth and wisdom*, to enable them to answer for themselves; which puts a greater honour upon them, which requires them to use the gifts and graces Christ furnisheth them with, and redounds the more to the glory of God, who *fills the enemy and avenger out of the mouths of babes and sucklings*. (3.) When Christ gives to his witnesses, a *mouth and wisdom*, they are enabled to say that, both for him, and themselves, which *all their adversaries are not able to gainsay and resist*, so that they are silenced, and put to confusion. This was remarkably fulfilled, presently after the pouring out of the Spirit, by whom Christ gave his disciples this *mouth and wisdom*, when the apostles were brought before the priests and rulers, and answered them so, as to make them ashamed, *Acts iv, v, and vi.*

3. You shall suffer no real damage by all the hardships they shall put upon you, *ver. 18. there shall not a hair of your head perish*. Shall some of them lose their heads, and yet not lose a hair? It is a proverbial expression, speaking the greatest indemnity and security imaginable; it is frequently used, both in the Old Testament, and New, in that sense. Some think it refers to the preservation of the lives of all the Christians that were among the Jews, when they were cut off by the Romans; historians tell us there was not one Christian perished in that desolation. Others reconcile it with the deaths of multitudes in the cause of Christ, and take it figuratively in the same sense that Christ saith, *He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it*. Not a hair of your head shall perish, but, (1.) I shall take cognizance of it, to this end he had said, *Matt. x. 30. the hairs of your head are all numbered*, and an account is kept of them, so that none of them shall perish, but he will miss it. (2.) It shall be upon a *valuable consideration*; we do not reckon that *lost* or *perishing*, which is laid out for good purposes, and will turn to a good account. If we drop the body itself for Christ's name sake, it doth not perish, but is well bestowed. (3.) It shall be abundantly recompensed; when you come to balance profit and loss, you will find there is nothing perished; but, on the contrary, you have great gain in present comforts, especially in the joys of life eternal. So that though we may be losers for Christ, we shall not, we cannot, be losers by him in the end.

4. It is therefore your duty and interest, in the midst of your own sufferings, and those of the nation, to maintain a holy sincerity and serenity of mind, which will keep you always easy, *ver. 19. In your patience possess ye your souls*; get and keep possession of your souls. Some read it as a promise, you *may*, or *shall*, possess your souls: It comes all to one. Note, 1. It is our duty and interest at all times, especially in perilous, trying times, to secure the possession of our own souls; not only that they be not destroyed and lost for ever, but that they be not distempered now, nor our possession of them disturbed and interrupted. *Possess your souls*, i. e. be your own men, keep up the authority and dominion of reason, and keep under the tumults of passion, that neither grief nor fear may tyrannize over you, or turn you out of the possession and enjoyment of yourselves. In difficult times, when we can keep possession of nothing else, then let us make that sure, which will be made sure, and keep possession of our souls. 2. It is by patience, Christian patience, that we keep possession of our own souls. In suffering times, set patience upon the guard, for the preserving of your souls; by it keep your souls composed, and in a good frame, and keep out all those impressions which would ruffle you, and put you out of temper.

20. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21. Then let them which are in Judea, flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it, depart out; and let not them that are in the countries, enter thereinto. 22. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23. But wo unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days: for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 24. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. 25 ¶ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26. Mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 27. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

Having



Having given them an idea of the times for about thirty eight years next ensuing, he here comes to shew them what all those things would issue in at last, namely the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter dispersion of the Jewish nation; which would be a little day of judgment; a type and figure of Christ's second coming; which was not so fully spoken of here as in the parallel place, *Matt. xxiv.* yet glanced at; for the destruction of Jerusalem would be as it were the destruction of the world, to those whose hearts were bound up in it.

1. He tells them that they should see Jerusalem besieged, *compassed with armies*, ver. 20. the Roman armies; and when they saw that, they might conclude that *its desolation was nigh*, for in that the siege would infallibly end, though it might be a long siege. Note, As in mercy, so in judgment, when God begins he will make an end.

2. He warns them upon this signal given to shift for their own safety, ver. 21. *Then let them which are in Judea*, quit the country, and *flee to the mountains*; let them which are in the midst of it, i. e. of Jerusalem, *depart out*, before the city be closely shut up, and (as we say now) before the trenches be opened; and let not them that are in the countries and villages about enter into the city, thinking to be safe there. Do you abandon a city and country, which you see God has abandoned and given up to ruin. *Come out of her, my people.*

3. He foretels the terrible havock that should be made of the Jewish nation, ver. 22. *Those be the days of vengeance*, so often spoken of by the Old Testament prophets, which would complete the ruin of that provoking people; all their predictions must now be fulfilled; and the blood of all the Old Testament martyrs must now be required; *All things that are written must be fulfilled at length.* After days of patience long abused, there will come *days of vengeance*; for reprieves are not pardons. The greatness of that destruction is set forth, (1.) By the inflicting cause of it, it is *wrath upon this people*, the wrath of God; that will kindle this devouring consuming fire. (2.) By the particular terror it would be to women with child, and poor mothers that are nurses. *Wo to them*, not only because they are most subject to frights, and least able to shift for their own safety, but because it will be a very great torment to them to think of having born and nursed children for the murderers. (3.) By the general confusion that should be all the nation over. There shall be *great distress in the land*, for men will not know what course to take, nor how to help themselves.

4. He describes the issue of the struggles between the Jews and the Romans, and what they will come to at last; in short, (1.) Multitudes of them shall fall by the edge of the sword. It is computed in those wars of the Jews, there fell by the sword above eleven hundred thousand. And the siege of Jerusalem was in effect a military execution. (2.) The rest shall be *led away captive*, not into one nation as when they were conquered by the Chaldeans, which gave them an opportunity of keeping together, but *into all nations*, which made it impossible for them to correspond with each other, much less to incorporate. (3.) Jerusalem itself was *trodden down of the Gentiles*. The Romans, when they had made themselves masters of it, laid it quite waste, as a *rebellious and bad city, hurtful to kings and provinces*, and therefore hateful to them.

5. He describes the great frights that people should generally be in. Many frightful sights shall be in the sun, moon, and stars, prodigies in the heavens, and here in this lower world, the sea and the waves roaring, with terrible storms and tempests, such as had not been known, and above the ordinary working of natural causes. The effect of which shall be an universal confusion, and consternation, upon the earth, *distress of nations with perplexity*, ver. 25. Dr. Hammond understands by the nations, the several governments or tetrarchies of the Jewish nation, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, these shall be brought to the last extremity. *Mens hearts shall fail them for fear*, ver. 26. ἀποψυχόντων ἀνθρώπων. Men being quite exanimated, dispirited, un-souled, dying away for fear. Thus they are killed all the day long, (by whom Christ's apostles were so, *Rom. viii. 36.*) that is, they are all the day long in fear of being killed; sinking under that which lies upon them, and yet still trembling for fear of worse, and looking after those things, which are coming upon the world; when judgment begins at the house of God, it will not end there; it shall be as if all the world were falling in pieces, and where can any be secure then? The powers of heaven shall be shaken, and then the pillars of the earth cannot but tremble. Thus shall the present Jewish policy, religion, laws, and government, be all entirely dissolved, by a series of unparalleled calamities, attended with the utmost confusion. So Dr. Clarke. But our Saviour makes use of these figurative expressions, because at the end of time they shall be literally accomplished, when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all their powers not only shaken, but broken, and the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up, 2 *Pet. iii. 10, 12.* As that day was all terror and destruction to the unbelieving Jews, so the great day will be to all unbelievers.

6. He makes this to be a kind of appearing of the Son of man, ver. 27. *Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.* The destruction of Jerusalem was in a

particular manner an act of Christ's judgment, the judgment committed to the Son of man; his religion could never be thoroughly established, but by the destruction of the temple, and the abolishing of the Levitical priesthood, and oeconomy, after which even the converted Jews, and many of the Gentiles too, were still hankering, till they were destroyed; so that it might justly be looked upon as a coming of the Son of man in power and great glory; yet not visibly, but in the clouds; for in executing such judgments as these, clouds and darkness are round about him. Now this was, (1.) An evidence of the first coming of the Messiah, so some understand it. Then the unbelieving Jews shall be convinced, when it is too late, that Jesus was the Messiah; they that would not see him coming in the power of his grace to save them, shall be made to see him coming in the power of his wrath to destroy them; that would not have him to reign over them, shall have him to triumph over them. (2.) It was an earnest of his second coming. Then in the terrors of that day they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, and all the terrors of the last day. They shall see a specimen of it, a faint resemblance of it. If this be so terrible, what will that be?

7. He encourageth all the faithful disciples in reference to the terrors of that day, ver. 28. *When these things begin to come to pass*, when Jerusalem is besieged, and every thing is concurring to the destruction of the Jews, then do you look up, when others are looking down, look heavenwards in faith, hope, and prayer, and lift up your heads with cheerfulness and confidence, for your redemption draws nigh. (1.) When Christ came to destroy the Jews, he came to redeem the Christians that were persecuted and oppressed by them; then had the churches rest. (2.) When he comes to judge the world at the last day, he will redeem all that are his from all their grievances. And the foresight of that day, is as pleasant to all good Christians, as it is terrible to the wicked and ungodly. Their death itself is so, when they see that day approaching, they can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draws nigh, their remove to their Redeemer.

8. Here is one word of prediction that looks further than the destruction of the Jewish nation, which is not easily understood, we have it, ver. 24. that *Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* (1.) Some understand it of what is past; so Dr. Hammond. The Gentiles that have conquered Jerusalem shall keep possession of it, and it shall be purely Gentile, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, till a great part of the Gentile world is become Christian, and then after Jerusalem is rebuilt by Adrian the emperor, with an exclusion of all the Jews from it, many of the Jews shall turn Christians, shall join with the Gentile Christians, to set up a church in Jerusalem, which shall flourish there for a long time. (2.) Others understand it of what is yet to come, so Dr. Whitby. Jerusalem shall be possessed by the Gentiles, of one sort or other for the most part, till the time comes when the nations that yet remain infidels shall embrace the Christian faith, when the kingdoms of this world shall become Christ's kingdoms, and then all the Jews shall be converted. Jerusalem shall be inhabited by them, and neither they nor their city any longer trodden down by the Gentiles.

29. And he spake to them a parable, Behold the fig-tree, and all the trees; 30. When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves, that summer is now nigh at hand. 31. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. 32. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. 33. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my word shall not pass away. 34. ¶ And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. 35. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. 37. And in the day time he was teaching in the temple, and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. 38. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

Here, in the close of this discourse;

1. Christ appoints his disciples to observe the signs of the times, which they might judge by, if they had an eye to the foregoing directions, with as much certainty and assurance as they could judge of the approach of summer by the budding forth of the trees, ver. 29, 30, 31. As in the kingdom of nature there is a chain of causes, so in the kingdom of providence there is a consequence of one event upon another. When we see a nation filling



filling up the measure of their iniquity, we may conclude their ruin is nigh; when we see the ruin of persecuting powers hastening on, we may from thence infer that *the kingdom of God is nigh at hand*, that when the opposition given to it is removed, it shall gain ground. As we may lawfully prognosticate the change of the seasons, when second causes have begun to work, so we may in the disposal of events expect something uncommon, when God is already raised up *out of his holy habitation*, Zech. ii. 13. then *stand still and see his salvation*.

2. He chargeth them to look upon those things, neither as *doubtful* nor *distant*, for then they would not make a due impression on them, but as *sure*, and very *near*. The destruction of the Jewish nation, (1.) Was *near*, ver. 32. *This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled*. There were some now alive that should see it; some that now heard the prediction of it. (2.) It was *sure*, the sentence was irreversible, it was a *consumption determined*, the decree was gone forth, ver. 33. *Heaven and earth shall pass away*, sooner than any word of mine: nay, they certainly shall pass away, but *my words shall not*; whether they *take hold* or no, they will *take effect*, and not one of them fall to the ground, 1 Sam. iii. 19.

3. He cautions them against security and sensuality, by which they would disfit themselves for the trying times that were coming on, and make them to be a great surprize and terror to them, ver. 34, 35. *Take heed to yourselves*; this is the word of command given to all Christ's disciples, *Take heed to yourselves*, that you be not overpowered by temptations, nor betrayed by your own corruptions. Note, We cannot be *safe*, if we be *secure*. It concerns us at all times, but especially at some times, to be very cautious. See here, (1.) What our *danger* is, that *the day of death and judgment should come upon us unawares*, when we do not expect it, and are not *prepared* for it, lest when we are called to meet our Lord, that be found the *furthest* thing in our thoughts, which ought always to be laid *nearest* our hearts, lest it *come upon us as a snare*; for so it will come upon the most of men, who dwell upon the earth, and mind *earthly things only*, and have no converse with heaven; to them it will be as a *snare*; see Eccl. ix. 12. It will be a *terror* and a *destruction* to them; it will put them into an unexpressible fright, and hold them fast for a doom yet more frightful. (2.) What our *duty* is, in consideration of this danger; we must *take heed lest our hearts be overcharged*, lest they be burthened and overloaded, and so disfit and disabled to do what must be done in preparation for death and judgment. Two things we must watch against, lest our hearts be overcharged with them. (1.) The indulging of the appetites of the body, and allowing ourselves in the gratifications of sense to an excess. *Take heed lest you be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*, the immoderate use of meat and drink, which burthen the heart, not only with the guilt thereby contracted, but by the ill influence which such disorders of the body have upon the mind; they make men dull and lifeless to their duty, dead and listless in their duty; they stupify the conscience, and make the mind *unaffected* with those things that are most *affecting*. (2.) The inordinate pursuit of the good things of this life. The heart is overcharged with *the cares of this life*. The former is the snare of those that are given to their pleasures: this is the snare of the men of business, that *will be rich*. We have need to guard on both hands, not only lest at the time when death comes, but lest at any time our hearts should be thus overcharged. Our caution against sin, and our care of our own souls, must be *constant*.

4. He counsels them to prepare and get ready for this great day, ver. 36. where see, (1.) What should be our *aim*, that we may be *accounted worthy to escape all those things*, that when the judgments of God are abroad, we may be preserved from the malignity of them, that either we may not be involved in the common calamity, or it may not be that to us that it is to others; that in the day of death we may escape the sting of it, which is the wrath of God, and the damnation of hell. Yet we must aim, not only to *escape that*, but to *stand before the Son of man*; not only to stand *acquitted* before him as our judge, (Psal. i. 5.) to have boldness in the day of Christ, that is supposed in our *escaping* all those things, but to *stand before him*, to attend on him as our Master, to stand continually before his throne, and serve him day and night in his temple, Rev. vii. 15. always to *behold his face*, as the angels, Matt. xviii. 10. The saints are here said to be *accounted worthy*, as before, chap. xx. 35. God, by the good work of his grace in them, *makes them meet* for this happiness, and by the good will of his grace towards them, *accounts them worthy* of it: but, as Grotius here saith, a great part of our worthiness lies in an acknowledgment of our own unworthiness. (2.) What should be our *actions* in these aims. *Watch therefore, and pray always*. Watching and praying must go together, Neh. iv. 9. Those that would escape the wrath to come, and make sure the joys to come, must *watch* and *pray*, and must do it always, must make it the constant business of their lives, (1.) To keep a guard upon themselves; watch against sin, watch to every duty, and to the improvement of every opportunity of doing good. Be awake, and keep awake, in expectation of your Lord's coming, that you may be in a right frame to receive him, and bid him welcome. (2.) To keep up their communion with

God, *pray always*: be always in an habitual disposition to that duty; keep up stated times for it, abound in it. Pray upon all occasions. Those shall be accounted worthy to live a life of praise in the other world, that live a life of prayer in this world.

In the two last verses we have an account how Christ disposed of himself, during those three or four days betwixt his riding in triumph into Jerusalem, and the night in which he was betrayed.

1. He was *all day teaching in the temple*. Christ preached on week-days, as well as sabbath-days. He was an indefatigable preacher, he preached in the face of opposition, and in the midst of those that he knew sought occasion against him.

2. At night he went out to lodge at a friend's house, in the mount of Olives, about a mile out of town. It is likely, he had some friends in the city that would gladly have lodged him, but he was willing to retire in the evening, out of the noise of the town, that he might have more time for secret devotion, now his hour was at hand.

3. Early in the morning he was in the temple again, where he had a morning lecture for those that were willing to attend it, and the people were forward to hear one that they saw forward to preach, ver. 38. *They all came early in the morning*, flocking to the temple, like doves to their windows, *for to hear him*, though the chief priests and scribes did all they could to prejudice them against him. Sometimes the taste and relish which serious, honest, plain people have of good preaching, is more to be valued and judged by, than the opinion of the witty and learned, and those in authority.

## C H A P. XXII.

*All the evangelists, whatever they omit, give us a particular account of the death and resurrection of Christ, because he died for our sins, and rose for our justification. And this evangelist, as fully as any, and with many circumstances and passages added, which we had not before. In this chapter we have, (1.) The plot to take Jesus, and Judas's coming into it, ver. 1—6. (2.) Christ's eating the passover with his disciples, ver. 7—18. (3.) The instituting of the Lord's supper, ver. 19, 20. (4.) Christ's discourse with his disciples, after supper, upon several heads, ver. 21—38. (5.) His agony in the garden, ver. 39—46. (6.) The apprehending of him, by the assistance of Judas, ver. 47—53. (7.) Peter's denying him, ver. 54—62. (8.) The indignities done to Christ by those that had him in custody, and his trial and condemnation in the ecclesiastical court, ver. 63—71.*

1. **N**OW the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover. 2. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. 3. ¶ Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. 4. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. 5. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. 6. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

The year of the redeemed is now come, which had been from eternity fixed in the divine counsels, and long looked for by them that waited for the consolation of Israel, after the revolutions of many ages it is at length come, Isa. lxiii. 4. And it is observable, it is in the very first month of that year, that the redemption is wrought out, so much in haste was the Redeemer to perform his undertaking, so was he *straitened* till it was *accomplished*. It was in the same month, and at the same time of the month, (in the beginning of months, Exod. xii. 2.) that God by Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, that the antitype might answer the type. Christ is here delivered up, *when the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh*, ver. 1. About as long before that feast as they began to make preparation for it, here was preparation a making for our passover's being offered for us.

1. Here we have his sworn enemies contriving it, ver. 2. The chief priests, men of sanctity, and the scribes, men of learning, seeking how they might kill him, either by force or fraud; could they have had their will, it had been soon done, but they feared the people, and the more, for what they now saw of their diligent attendance upon his preaching.

2. A treacherous disciple joined in with them, and coming to their assistance, Judas surnamed Iscariot, he is here said to be of the number of the twelve, that dignified, distinguished number. One would wonder that Christ, who knew all men, should take a traitor into that number; and that one of that number, who could not but know Christ, should be so base as to betray him; but Christ



Christ had wife and holy ends in taking Judas to be a disciple, and how he, who knew Christ so well, yet came to betray him we are here told, *ver. 3. Satan entered into Judas.* It was the devil's work, who thought hereby to ruin Christ's undertaking, to have broke his head, but it proved only the bruising of his heel. Whoever betrays Christ, or his truths, or ways, it is Satan that puts them upon it. Judas knew how desirous the chief priests were to get Christ into their hands, and that they could not do it safely without the assistance of some that knew his retirements, as he did: He therefore went himself, and made the motion to them, *ver. 4.* Note, It is hard to say whether more mischief is done to Christ's kingdom by the power and policy of its open enemies, or by the treachery and self-seeking of its pretended friends: Nay, without that, its enemies could not gain their point as they do. When you see Judas communing with the *chief priests*, before some mischief is in hatching; it is for no good that they are laying their heads together.

The issue of the treaty between them is, (1.) That Judas must *betray Christ to them*, must bring them to a place where they might seize him without danger of tumult, and this they would be glad of. (2.) They must give him a sum of money for doing it, and that he would be glad of, *ver. 5.* They *covenanted to give him money.* When the bargain was made; Judas sought opportunity to betray him: Probably he slyly enquired of Peter and John, who were more intimate with their Master than he was, where he would be at such a time, and whether he would retire after the passover, and they were not sharp enough to suspect him. Some how or other, in a little time, he gained the advantage he sought, and fixed the time and place where it might be done, *in the absence of the multitude, and without tumult.*

7. ¶ Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. 8. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. 9. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? 10. And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entred into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entred in. 11. And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 12. And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. 13. And they went and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. 14. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. 15. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. 16. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. 17. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves. 18. For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. 19. ¶ And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. 20. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

What a hopeful prospect had we of Christ's doing a great deal of good by his preaching in the temple, during the feast of unleavened bread, which continued seven days, when the people were every morning, and early in the morning, so attentive to hear him? But here is a stop put to it: He must enter upon work of another kind, but in that he shall do more good than in the other, for neither Christ's nor his church's suffering days, are their idle, empty days.

Now here we have,

1. The preparation that was made for Christ's eating the passover with his disciples, upon the very day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed according to the law, *ver. 7.* Christ was made under the law, and observed the ordinances of it, and particularly that of the passover, to teach us in like manner to observe his gospel institutions, particularly that of the Lord's supper, and not to neglect them. It is probable he went to the temple to preach in the morning, when he sent Peter and John another way into the city to prepare the passover. Those who have attendants about them, to do their secular business for them in a great measure, must not think that that allows them to be idle, but it engageth them to employ themselves more in spiritual business, or service to the publick. He directed those whom he employed, whither they should go, *ver. 9, 10.* They must follow a man bearing a pitcher of water, and he must be their guide to the house. Christ could have described the house to them, probably it was a house they knew, and he might have said no more, but go to such a one's house, or to a house

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in such a street, with such a sign, &c. But he directed them thus, to teach them to depend upon the conduct of providence, and to follow that, *step by step.* They went, not knowing whither they went, but whom they followed. Being come to the house, they must desire the master of the house to shew them a room, *ver. 11.* and he will readily do it, *ver. 12.* Whether it was a friend's house, or a publick house, doth not appear; but the disciples found their guide, and the house and the room, just as he had said to them, *ver. 13.* for they need not fear a disappointment who go upon Christ's word; and, according to the orders given them, they got every thing in readiness for the passover, *ver. 13.*

2. The solemnizing of the passover according to the law. When the hour was come, that they should go to supper, he sat down, it is likely, at the head end of the table, and the twelve apostles with him, Judas not excepted; for it is possible that they whose hearts are filled with Satan, and all manner of wickedness, may yet continue a plausible profession of religion, and be found in the performances of its external services. And while it is in the heart, and doth not break out into any thing scandalous, such cannot be denied the external privileges of their external profession. Though Judas has already been guilty of an overt-act of treason, yet it not being publickly known, Christ admits him to sit down with the rest at the passover. Now observe,

(1.) How Christ bids this passover welcome, to teach us in like manner to welcome his passover, the Lord's supper, and to come to it with an appetite, *ver. 15.* With desire I have desired, I have most earnestly desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer. He knew it was to be the prologue to his sufferings, and therefore he desired it, because it was in order to his Father's glory, and man's redemption. He delighted to do even this part of the will of God, concerning him as mediator. Shall we be backward to any service for him, who was so forward in the work of our salvation? See the love he had to his disciples, he desired to eat it with them, that he and they might have a little time together, themselves, and none but they, for private conversation, which they could not have in Jerusalem, but upon this occasion. He was now about to leave them, but was very desirous to eat this passover with them, before he suffered, as if the comfort of that would carry him the more chearfully through his sufferings, and make them the easier to him. Note, Our gospel passover eaten by faith with Jesus Christ, will be an excellent preparation for sufferings and trials, and death itself.

(2.) How Christ in it takes his leave of all passovers, thereby signifying his abrogating of all the ordinances of the ceremonial law, of which that of the passover was one of the earliest, and one of the most eminent, *ver. 16.* I will not any more eat thereof, nor shall it be any more celebrated by my disciples, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. (1.) It was fulfilled when Christ our passover was sacrificed for us, 1 Cor. v. 7. And therefore that type and shadow was laid aside, because now in the kingdom of God the substance was come, which superseded them. (2.) It was fulfilled in the Lord's supper, an ordinance of the gospel kingdom, in which the passover had its accomplishment, and which the disciples, after the pouring out of the Spirit, did frequently celebrate, as we find Acts ii. 42, 46. They eat of it, and Christ may be said to eat with them, because of the spiritual communion they had with him in that ordinance: He is said to sup with them, and they with him, Rev. iii. 20. But, (3.) The complete accomplishment of that commemoration of liberty will be in the kingdom of glory, when all God's spiritual Israel shall be released from the bondage of death and sin, and be put in possession of the land of promise.

What he had said of his eating of the paschal lamb, he repeats concerning his drinking of the passover wine; the cup of blessing, or of thanksgiving, in which all the company pledged the Master of the feast, at the close of the passover-supper. This cup he took, according to the custom, and gave thanks for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the preservation of their first-born, and then said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves, *ver. 17.* This is not said afterwards of the sacramental cup, probably that being of much more weight and value, being the New Testament in his blood, he might give that into every one's hand, to teach them to make a particular application of it to their own souls; but as for the paschal cup, which is to be abolished, it is enough to say, Take it and divide it among yourselves, do what you will with it, for we shall have no more occasion for it, *ver. 18.* I will not drink of the fruit of the vine any more; I will not have it any more drunk of, till the kingdom of God shall come, till the Spirit be poured out, and then you shall in the Lord's supper commemorate a much more glorious redemption; of which both the deliverance out of Egypt, and the passover commemoration of it, were types and figures. The kingdom of God is now so near being set up, that you will not need to eat or drink any more till it comes; Christ dying next day opened it. As Christ, with a great deal of pleasure, took leave of all the legal feasts (which fell of course with the passover) for the evangelical ones, both spiritual and sacramental; so may good Christians, when they are called to remove from the church militant, to that which is triumphant, chearfully exchange even their spiritual repasts, much more their sacramental ones, for the eternal feast.



3. The institution of the Lord's supper, *ver.* 19, 20. The *passover* and the *deliverance* out of Egypt, were *typical* and *prophetic signs* of a Christ to come, that should by dying deliver us from sin and death, and the tyranny of Satan; but they shall no more say, *the Lord liveth that brought us up out of the land of Egypt*, a much greater deliverance shall eclipse the lustre of that, and therefore the Lord's supper is instituted, to be a commemorative sign or memorial of a Christ already come, that *has*, by dying, delivered us; and it is his death that is in a special manner set before us in that ordinance.

5. The *breaking of Christ's body* as a *sacrifice for us*, is here commemorated by the *breaking of bread*; and the sacrifices under the law, were called the *bread of our God*, Lev. xxi. 6, 8, 17. *This is my body which is given for you*: And there is a feast upon that sacrifice instituted; in which we are to apply it to our selves, and to take the benefit and comfort of it; this bread that was given for us, is given to us, to be food to our souls, for nothing can be more *nourishing* and *satisfying* to our souls, than the doctrine of Christ's making atonement for sin, and the assurance of our interest in that atonement; this bread that was *broken and given for us*, to satisfy for the guilt of our sins, is *broken and given to us*, to satisfy the desire of our souls. And this we do in remembrance of what he did for us, when he died for us, and for a memorial of what we do in making ourselves *partakers of him*, and joining ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant; like the stone Joshua set up for a witness, Josh. xxiv. 27.

2. The *shedding of Christ's blood*, by which the atonement was made (for the blood made atonement for the soul, Lev. xvii. 11.) as represented by the wine in the cup, and that cup of wine is a sign and token of the New Testament, or new covenant made with us. It commemorates the purchase of the covenant by the blood of Christ, and confirms the promises of the covenant, which are all *Yea* and *Amen* in him. This will be reviving and refreshing to our souls, as wine that *makes glad the heart*. In all our commemorations of the shedding of Christ's blood, we must have an eye to it as shed for us; we needed it, we take hold of it, we hope to have benefit by it, *who loved me, and gave himself for me*. And in all our regards to the New Testament, we must have an eye to the *blood of Christ*, which gave life and being to it, and seals to us all the promises of it. Had it not been for the blood of Christ, we had never had the New Testament; and had it not been for the New Testament, we had never known the meaning of Christ's blood shed.

21. ¶ But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me, is with me on the table. 22. And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined: but wo unto that man by whom he is betrayed. 23. And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. 24. ¶ And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. 25. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them, are called benefactors. 26. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. 28. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. 29. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me: 30. That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 31. ¶ And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. 33. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into prison, and to death. 34. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. 35. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. 36. Then said he unto them, But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. 37. For I say unto you, that this that is written, must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. 38. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples after supper, much of which is new here; and in St. John's gospel we shall find more that is new still. We should take example from him, to entertain and edify our family and friends with such discourse at table as is good, and to the use of edifying, which may minister grace to the hearers; but especially after we have been at the Lord's table, by Christian conference to keep one another in a suitable frame. The matters Christ here discoursed of were of weight, and to the present purpose.

First, He discoursed with them concerning him that should betray him, who was now present.

1. He signifies to them that the traitor was now among them, and one of them, *ver.* 21. By the placing of this after the institution of the Lord's supper, which in Matthew and Mark is placed before it, it seems plain, that Judas did receive the Lord's supper, did eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, for after the solemnity was over, Christ said, *Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me, is with me on the table*. There have been those that have eaten bread with Christ, and yet have betrayed him.

2. He foretels that the treason would take effect, *ver.* 22. *truly the Son of man goes as it was determined*; goes to the place where he will be betrayed; for he is delivered up by the counsel and foreknowledge of God, else Judas could not have delivered him up. Christ was not driven to his sufferings, but cheerfully went to them. He said, *Lo, I come*.

3. He threatens the traitor, *Wo to that man by whom he is betrayed*. Note, Neither the patience of the saints under their sufferings, nor the counsel of God concerning their sufferings, will be any excuse for those that have any hand in their sufferings, or that persecute them. Though God has determined that Christ shall be betrayed, and he himself has cheerfully submitted to it, yet Judas's sin or punishment is not at all the less.

4. He frightens the rest of the disciples into a suspicion of themselves, by saying it was one of them, and not naming which, *ver.* 23. *they began to enquire among themselves*, to interrogate themselves, to put the question to themselves, *who it was that should do this thing*, that could be so base to so good a Master. The enquiry was not, Is it you? or is it such a one? but, Is it I.

Secondly, Concerning the strife that was among them for precedence or supremacy.

1. See what the dispute was; *which of them should be accounted the greatest*. Such and so many contests we find among the disciples for dignity and dominion before the Spirit was poured upon them, was a sad presage of the like strifes for, and affectations of, supremacy in the churches, after the Spirit should be provoked to depart from them. How inconsistent is this with that in the verse before: There they were enquiring which would be the traitor, and here which should be the prince. Could such an instance of humility, and such an instance of pride and vanity, be found in the same men so near together? This is like *sweet waters and bitter*, proceeding at the same place out of the same fountain: What a self-contradiction is the deceitful heart of man!

2. See what Christ said to this dispute: He was not sharp upon them, as might have been expected, he having so often reproved them for this very thing, but mildly shewed them the sin and folly of it.

1. This was to make themselves like the *kings of the Gentiles*, that affect worldly pomp, and with worldly power, *ver.* 25. They exercise lordship over their subjects, and are ever and anon striving to exercise lordship too over the *princes* that are about them, though as good as themselves, if they think them not so strong as themselves. Note, The exercising of lordship better becomes the *kings of the Gentiles* than the ministers of Christ. But observe, They that exercise authority, and take upon themselves to bear sway and give law, they are called *benefactors*, *Εὐεργέται*, they call themselves so, and so their flatterers call them, and those that set themselves to serve their interests. It is pretended, that they have been benefactors, and upon that account they should be admitted to have rule; nay, that in exercising authority they are benefactors; however they really serve themselves, they would be thought to serve their country. One of the Ptolemy's was surnamed Euergetes the benefactor. Now our Saviour, by taking notice of this, intimates, (1.) That to do good is much more honourable than to look great; for these princes that were the terror of the mighty, yet would not be called so, but rather the *benefactors of the needy*; so that by their own confession, a benefactor to his country is much more valued than a ruler of his country. (2.) That to do good is the surest way to be great, else they that aimed to be rulers, would not have been so solicitous to be called *benefactors*: this therefore he would have his disciples believe, that their greatest honour would be to do all the good they could in the world. They would indeed be *benefactors* to the world, by bringing the gospel to it. Let them value themselves upon that title, which they would indeed be intitled to, and then they need not strive which should be the greatest, for they would all be greater; greater blessings to mankind than the kings of the earth, that exercise lordship over them. If they have that which is confessedly the greater honour, of being benefactors, let them despise the lesser, of being rulers.



2. It was to make themselves unlike the disciples of Christ, and unlike Christ himself, *ver. 26, 27. Ye shall not be so.* It was never intended that you should *rule*, any otherwise than by the power of truth and grace, but that you should *serve*. When church-rulers affect external pomp and power, and bear up themselves by secular interests and influences, they debase their office, and it is an instance of degeneracy like that of Israel, when they would have a king like the nations that were round about them, whereas the Lord was their King.

See here, (1.) What is the rule Christ gave to his disciples. He that is *greater among you*, that is *senior*, to whom precedency is due upon the account of his age, let him be as the *younger*, both in point of *lowliness of place*, let him condescend to sit with the younger, and be free and familiar with them; and in point of *labour and work*. We used to say, *juniores ad labores, seniores ad honores*; but let the elder take pains as well as the younger; their age and honour, instead of warranting them to take their ease, binds them to double work. And he that is *chief*, the *ὁ πρῶτος*, the *president* of the college or assembly, let him be as he that doth *serve*, *ὡς ὁ διακωνῶν*, as the deacon, let him stoop to the meanest and most toilsome services for the publick good, if there be occasion.

(2.) What was the example which he himself gave to this rule. *Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth?* He that attendeth, or he that is attended on? Now Christ was among his disciples, just like one that waited at table; he was so far from *taking state*, or *taking his ease* by commanding their attendance upon him, that he was ready to do any office of kindness and service for them; witness his *washing* their feet. Shall they take upon them the form of princes, who call themselves followers of him that *took upon him the form of a servant*?

3. They ought not to strive for worldly honour and grandeur, because he had better honours in reserve for them of another nature, a *kingdom*, a *feast*, a *throne* for each of them, wherein they should be all share and share like, and should have no occasion to strive for precedency, *ver. 28, 29, 30.* Where observe,

1. The commendation Christ gives of the disciples for their faithfulness to him, and this was honour enough for them, they needed not to strive for any greater. It is spoken with an air of encomium and applause, *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations*, you are they which have stood by me, and stuck to me, when others have deserted me, and turned their backs upon me. Christ had his temptations, he was despised and rejected of men, reproached and reviled, and *endured the contradiction of sinners*. But his disciples continued with him, and were afflicted in all his afflictions. It was but little help that they could give him, or service that they could do him; but however, he took it kindly that they *continued with him*, and he here owns their kindness, though it was by the assistance of his own grace that they did continue. Christ's disciples had been very defective in their duty, we find them guilty of many mistakes and weaknesses, they were very dull, and very forgetful, and often blundered; yet their Master has passed all by and forgotten it, doth not upbraid them with their infirmities, but gives them this memorable testimonial, *Ye are they which have continued with me*. Thus doth he praise at parting, to show how willing he is to make the best of those, whose hearts he knows to be upright with him.

2. The recompence he designed them for their fidelity. And I appoint, *διατίθεμαι*, I bequeath unto you a kingdom. Or thus, I appoint to you, as my Father has appointed a kingdom to me, that you may eat and drink at my table. Understand it,

1. Of what should be done for them in this world. God gave his Son a *kingdom among men*, the gospel church, which he is the living, quickening, ruling head of, this *kingdom* he appointed to his apostles and their successors in the ministry of the gospel, that they should enjoy the comforts and privileges of the gospel, and help to communicate them to others, by gospel ordinances; and should sit on thrones as officers of the church, not only declaratively, but as exhortatively *judging the tribes of Israel*, that persist in their infidelity, and denouncing the wrath of God against them; and ruling the gospel Israel, the spiritual Israel, by the instituted discipline of the church, administered with gentleness and love. This is the honour reserved for you. Or,

2. Of what should be done for them in the other world; which I take to be chiefly meant. Let them go on in their services in this world, their preferments shall be in the other world; God will give them *the kingdom*, in which they shall be sure to have, (1.) *The richest dainties*, for they shall *eat and drink at Christ's table in his kingdom*, of which he had spoken, *ver. 16, 18.* They shall partake of those joys and pleasures which were the recompence of his services and sufferings. They shall have a full satisfaction of soul, in the vision and fruition of God; and herein they shall have the best society, as at a feast, in the perfection of love. (2.) *The highest dignities*. You shall not only be provided for at the royal table, as Mephibosheth at David's, but you shall be preferred to the royal throne; shall sit down with me on my throne, *Rev. iii. 21.* In the great day you shall sit on thrones, as assessors with Christ, to approve of, and applaud his judgment of the *twelve tribes of Israel*. If

the *saints shall judge the world*, 1 Cor. vi. 2. much more the church.

Thirdly, Concerning Peter's denying of him. And in this part of the discourse, we may observe,

1. The general notice Christ gives to Peter of the devil's design upon him, and the rest of the apostles, *ver. 31. The Lord said, Simon, Simon, observe what I say, Satan has desired to have you, to have you all in his hands, that he may sift you as wheat.* Peter, that used to be the mouth of the rest in speaking to Christ, is here made the ear of the rest, and what is designed for warning to them all, *All you shall be offended because of me*, is directed to Peter, because he was principally concerned, being in a particular manner struck at by the tempter. *Satan has desired to have you.* Probably, Satan had *accused* the disciples to God, as mercenary in following Christ, and aiming at nothing else therein, but enriching and advancing themselves in this world, as he accused Job; No, faith God, they are honest men, and men of integrity; give me leave to try them, faith Satan, and Peter particularly. He desired to have them, *that he might sift them*, that he might shew them to be chaff, and not wheat. The troubles that were now coming upon them were *sifting*, would try what there was in them; but that was not all, Satan desired to sift them by his temptations, and endeavouring by those troubles to draw them into sin; to put them into a loss and hurry, as corn when it is sifted, to bring the chaff uppermost, or rather, to shake out the wheat and leave nothing but the chaff. Observe, Satan could not sift them, unless God gave him leave; he *desired to have them*, as he begged of God a permission to try and tempt Job. *ἐξήρισάτο, He hath challenged you*, has undertaken to prove you a company of hypocrites, and Peter especially, the forwardest of you. Some suggest, that Satan demanded leave to sift them, as their punishment for striving who should be greatest, in which contest Peter, perhaps, was very warm. Leave them to me to sift them for it.

2. The particular encouragement he gave to Peter in reference to this trial. *I have prayed for thee*, because though he desired to have them all, he was permitted to make his strongest onset upon thee only; thou wilt be most violently assaulted, *but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not*, that it may not totally and finally fail. Note, (1.) If faith be kept up in an hour of temptation, though we may fall, yet we shall not be utterly cast down. Faith will quench Satan's fiery darts. (2.) Though there may be many failings in the faith of true believers, yet there shall not be a total and final failure of their faith. It is their seed, their root remaining in them. (3.) It is owing to the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ, that the faith of his disciples, though sometimes sadly shaken, yet is not sunk. If they were left to themselves they would fail, but they are kept by the power of God, and the prayer of Christ. The intercession of Christ is not only general, for all that believe, but for particular believers, I have prayed for thee, which is an encouragement for us to pray for ourselves, and an engagement upon us to pray for others too.

3. The charge he gives to Peter to help others, as he should himself be helped of God, *When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren*; when thou art recovered by the grace of God, and brought to repentance, do what thou canst to recover others; when thou hast found thy faith kept from failing, labour to confirm the faith of others, and to establish them. When thou hast found mercy with God thyself, encourage others to hope that they also shall find mercy. Note, 1. Those that are fallen into sin, must be *converted from it*; that have turned aside, must *return*; that have left their first love, must do their first works. 2. Those that through grace are converted from sin, must do what they can to strengthen their brethren that stand, and to prevent their falling, See *Psal. li. 11, 12, 13. 1 Tim. i. 13.*

4. Peter's declared resolution to cleave to Christ, whatever it cost him, *ver. 33. Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death.* This was a great word, and yet I believe no more than he thought at this time, and thought he should make good too. Judas never protested thus against denying Christ, though often warned of it; for his heart was as fully set in him to the evil, as Peter's was against it. Note, All the true disciples of Christ, sincerely desire and design to *follow him whithersoever he goes*, and whithersoever he leads them, though into a prison, though out of the world.

5. Christ's express prediction of his denying him thrice, *ver. 34. I tell thee, Peter, thou dost not know thine own heart, but must be left to thyself a little that thou mayest know it, and mayest never trust to it again, and then the cock shall not crow this day, before thou even deny that thou knowest me.* Note, Christ knows us better than we know ourselves, and knows the evil that is in us, and will be done by us, which we ourselves do not suspect. It is well for us, that Christ knows where we are weak, better than we do, and therefore where to come in with grace sufficient; that he knows how far a temptation will prevail, and therefore when to say, *Hitherto shall it come and no further.*

Fourthly, Concerning the condition of all the disciples.

1. He appeals to them concerning what had been, *ver. 35. He had owned that they had been faithful servants to him, ver. 28. now he expects at parting, that they should acknowledge that he*

had



had been a kind and careful master to them, ever since they left all to follow him. *When I sent you without purse, lacked you any thing?* (1.) He owns that he had sent them out in a very poor and bare condition, bare-foot, and no money in their purses, because they were not to go far, nor be out long, and he would thus teach them to depend upon the providence of God, and, under that, upon the kindness of their friends. If God thus send us out into the world, remember, better than we have thus begun low. (2.) Yet he will have them own, that notwithstanding this, they had *lacked nothing*; they then lived as plentifully and comfortably as ever; and they readily acknowledged it, *nothing, Lord, I have all, and abound.* Note, 1. It is good for us often to review the providences of God that have been concerning us all our days, and to observe how we have got through the straits and difficulties we have met with. 2. Christ is a good master, and his service a good service, for though his servants may sometimes be brought low, yet he will help them; and though he try them, yet will not he leave them. *Jehovah Fireh.* 3. We must reckon ourselves well done by, and must not complain, but be thankful if we have had the necessary supports of life, though we have had neither dainties nor superfluities, though we have lived from hand to mouth, and lived upon the kindness of our friends. The disciples lived upon contributions, and yet did not complain that their maintenance was precarious, but owned to their Master's honour, that it was sufficient, they had wanted nothing.

2. He gives them notice of a very great change of their circumstances now approaching. For,

1. He that was their master was now entering upon his suffering, which he had often foretold, *ver. 37.* Now *that which is written must be fulfilled in me*, that among the rest, *He was numbered among the transgressors*; he must suffer and die as a malefactor, and in company with some of the vilest of malefactors. This is that which is *yet to be accomplished*, after all the rest, and then *the things concerning me*, the things written concerning me, will have an end; then I shall say, *It is finished.* Note, It may be the comfort of suffering Christians, as it was of a suffering Christ, that their sufferings were foretold and *determined* in the counsels of heaven, and will shortly *determine* in the joys of heaven. They were *written* concerning them, and they *will have an end*, and will end well, everlastingly well.

2. They must therefore expect troubles, and must not think how to have such an easy fair life as you have had, no, the scene will alter. They must now in some degree suffer with their Master, and when he is gone they must expect to suffer like him. The servant is not better than his lord. (1.) They must not now expect that their friends would be so kind and generous to them as they had been, and therefore *he that has a purse let him take it*, for he may have occasion for it, and for all the good husbandry he can use. (2.) They must now expect that their enemies would be more fierce upon them, than they had been, and they would need magazines as well as stores. *He that has no sword* wherewith to defend himself against robbers and assassins, (2 Cor. xi. 26.) will find a great want of it, and will be ready to wish, some time or other, that he had sold his garment and bought one. This is intended only to shew that the times would be very perilous, so that no man would think himself safe if he had not a sword by his side. But the *sword of the Spirit* is the sword which the disciples of Christ must furnish themselves with, *Christ having suffered for us*, we must *arm ourselves* with the same mind, 1 Pet. iv. 1. arm ourselves with an expectation of trouble, that it may not be a surprize to us, and with a holy resignation to the will of God in it, that there may be no contradiction in us to it. And then we are better prepared than if we had sold a coat to buy a sword. The disciples hereupon enquire what strength they had, and find they had among them *two swords*, *ver. 38.* of which one was Peter's. The Galileans generally travelled with swords. Christ wore none himself, but he was not against his disciples wearing them. But how little he would have them depend upon that, he intimates, when he saith, *it is enough.* Which some think is spoken ironically. Two swords among twelve men, you are bravely armed indeed, when our enemies are now coming out against us in great multitudes, and every one a sword: yet two swords are enow to those who need none, having God himself to be *the shield of their help and the sword of their excellency*, Deut xxxii. 29.

39 ¶ And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. 40. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray, that ye enter not into temptation. 41. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, 42. Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. 43. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. 44. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. 45. And when he

rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, 46. And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

We have here the awful story of Christ's *agony in the garden*, just before he was betrayed, which was largely related by the other evangelists. In it Christ *accommodated himself* to that part of his undertaking which he was now entering upon, the making of *his soul an offering for sin*: He afflicted his own soul with grief for the sin he was to satisfy for, and an apprehension of the wrath of God to which man had by sin made himself obnoxious, which he was pleased as a sacrifice to admit the impressions of, the consuming of a sacrifice with fire from heaven, being the surest token of its acceptance. In it, Christ entered the lists with the powers of darkness, gave them all the advantages they could desire, and yet conquered them.

That which we have here in this story, which we had before is, (1.) That when Christ went out, though it was in the night, and a long walk, yet *his disciples followed him*, eleven of them, for Judas had given them the slip. Having continued with him hitherto in his temptations, they would not leave him now. (2.) That he went to the place *where he was wont* to be private, which intimates that Christ accustomed himself to retirement, was oft alone, to teach us to be so, for freedom of converse with God and our own hearts. Though Christ had no convenience for retirement, but a garden, yet he retired. This should particularly be our practice, after we have been at the Lord's table; we have then work to do, which requires us to be private. (3.) That he exhorted his disciples to *pray*, that though the approaching trial could not be avoided, yet that they might not in it *enter into temptation* to sin; that when they were in the greatest fright and danger, yet they might not have any inclination to desert Christ, nor take a step towards it. Pray that ye may be *kept from sin*. (4.) That he withdrew from them and prayed himself; they had their errands at the throne of grace, and he had his, and therefore it was fit they should pray separately, as sometimes when they had joint errands they prayed together. He withdrew about a *stone's cast* further into the garden, which some reckon about fifty or sixty paces, and there he *kneeled down*, so it is here, upon the bare ground; but the other evangelists say, that afterwards he *fell on his face*, and there *prayed*, that if it were the will of God this cup of suffering, this bitter cup, might be *removed from him*. This was the language of that innocent dread of suffering, which being really and truly man, he could not but have in his nature. (5.) That he knowing it to be his Father's will that he should suffer and die, and that as the matter was now settled, it was necessary for our redemption and salvation, presently withdrew that petition, did not insist upon it, but resigned himself to his heavenly Father's will: *Nevertheless not my will be done*; not the will of my human nature, but the will of God as it is written concerning me in the volume of the book, *which I delight to do*, let that be done, *Psal. xl. 7, 8.* (6.) That his disciples were *asleep*, when he was at prayer, and when they should have been themselves praying, *ver. 45.* When he *rose from prayer* he *found them sleeping*, unconcerned in his sorrows: but see what a favourable construction is here put upon it, which we had not in the other evangelists, they were *sleeping for sorrow*. The great sorrow they were in upon the mournful farewells their Master had been this evening giving them, had exhausted their spirits, and made them very dull and heavy, which (it being now late) disposed them to sleep. This teaches us to make the best of our brethren's infirmities, and if there be one cause better than another, charitably impute them to that. (7.) That when he waked them, then he exhorted them to pray, *ver. 46.* *Why sleep ye?* Why do you allow yourselves to sleep, *rise and pray.* Shake off your drowsiness, that you may be *fit to pray*, and *pray for grace*, that you may be able to *shake off* your drowsiness. This was like the ship-master's call to Jonah in a storm, *Jon i. 6.* *Arise, call upon thy God.* When we find ourselves either by our outward circumstances, or our inward dispositions entering into temptation, it concerns us to *rise and pray*, Lord, help me in this *time of need*.

But here are three things in this passage, which we had not in the other evangelists.

1. That when Christ was in his agony, *there appeared* to him *an angel from heaven, strengthening him*, *ver. 43.* (1.) It was an instance of the deep humiliation of our Lord Jesus, that he *needed* the assistance of an angel, and would *admit* it. The influence of the divine nature withdrew for the present, and then as to his human nature he was for a little while *lower than the angels*, and was capable of receiving help from them. (2.) When he was not delivered from his sufferings, yet he was *strengthened* and supported under them, and that was *equivalent*. If God proportion the shoulders to the burthen, we shall have no reason to complain, whatever he is pleased to lay upon us. David owns this a sufficient *answer to his prayer*, in the day of trouble, that God strengthened him with strength in his soul, and so doth the Son of David, *Psal. cxxxviii. 3.* (3.) The angels ministered to the Lord Jesus in his sufferings: He could have had legions of them



them to rescue him; nay, this one could have done it, could have chased and conquered the whole band of men that came to take him; but he made use of his ministration only to *strengthen him*; and the very visit which this angel made him now, in his grief, when his enemies were awake, and his friends asleep, was such a seasonable token of the divine favour, as would be a very great strengthening to him. Yet this was not all: he probably *did something to him to strengthen him*; put him in mind that his sufferings were in order to his Father's glory, to his own glory, and to the salvation of those that were given him, represented to him the joy set before him, the seed he should see; with these, and the like suggestions, he encouraged him to go on cheerfully, and what is comforting is strengthening. Perhaps he *did something to strengthen him*, wiped away his sweat and tears, perhaps ministered some cordial to him, as after his temptation, or it may be took him by the arm, and helped him off the ground, or bore him up when he was ready to faint away; and in these services of the angel, the holy Spirit was *ἐνισχύων αὐτόν*, putting strength into him, for so the word signifies. It pleased the Lord to bruise him indeed, yet did he plead against him with his great power? no, but he put strength in him, Job xxiii. 6. as he had promised, Psal. lxxxix. 21. Isa. xlix. 8.—1. 7.

2. That being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, ver. 44. As his sorrow and trouble grew upon him, he grew more importunate in prayer; not that there was before any coldness or indifferency in his prayers, but there was now a greater vehemency in them, which was expressed in his voice and gesture. Note, Prayer, though never out of season, is in a special manner seasonable, when we are in an agony; and the stronger our agonies are, the more lively and frequent our prayers should be. Now it was that Christ offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, and was heard in that he feared, Heb. v. 7. and in his fear wrestled, as Jacob with the angel.

3. That in this agony, his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Sweat came in with sin, and was a branch of the curse, Gen. iii. 19. And therefore when Christ was made sin and a curse for us, he underwent a grievous sweat, that in the sweat of his face we might eat bread, and that he might sanctify and sweeten all our trials to us. It is some dispute among the critics, whether this sweat is only compared to drops of blood, being much thicker than drops of sweat commonly are, the pores of the body being more than ordinarily opened: Or, that real blood out of the capillary veins mingled with it, so that it was in colour like blood, and might truly be called a bloody sweat; the matter is not great. Some reckon this one of the times when Christ shed his blood for us, for without shedding of blood no remission. Every pore was as it were a bleeding wound, and his blood stained all his raiment. This shewed the travail of his soul. He was now abroad in the open air, in a cool season, upon the cold ground, far in the night, which, one would think, had been enough to strike in a sweat; yet now he breaks out into a sweat, which speaks the extremity of the agony he was in.

47. ¶ And while he yet spake, behold, a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus, to kiss him. 48. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? 49. When they which were about him, saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? 50. ¶ And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. 51. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. 52. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders which were come to him, Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? 53. When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Satan finding himself baffled in his attempt to terrify our Lord Jesus, and so to put him out of the possession of his own soul, betakes himself (according to his usual method) to force and arms, and brings a party into the field to seize him, and Satan was in them: Here is,

1. The marking of him by Judas. Here is a numerous party appears, and Judas at the head of them, for he was guide to them that took Jesus; they knew not where to find him, but he brought them to the place, when they were there they knew not which was he; but Judas told them, that whoever he should kiss, that same was he, so he drew near to him to kiss him, according to the wonted freedom and familiarity which our Lord Jesus admitted his disciples to. Luke takes notice of the question Christ asked him, which we have not in the other evangelists, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? What, is that the signal? ver. 48. Must the Son of man be betrayed, as No. xcii.

if any thing could be concealed from him, and a plot carried on against him unknown to him? Must one of his own disciples betray him, as if he had been a hard master to them, or deserved ill at their hands? Must he be betrayed with a kiss? Must the badge of friendship be the instrument of treachery? Was ever a love-token so desecrated and abused? Note, Nothing can be a greater affront or grief to the Lord Jesus, than to be betrayed, and betrayed with a kiss, by those that profess relation to him, and an affection for him. Those do so, who, under pretence of zeal for his honour, persecute his servants, who, under the cloke of a seeming affection for the honour of free-grace, give a blow to the root of holiness, and strictness of conversation. Many instances there are, of Christ's being betrayed with a kiss, by those who, under the form of godliness, fight against the power of it. It were well if their own consciences would put this question to them, which Christ here puts to Judas, Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? And will he not resent it? Will he not revenge it?

2. The effort which his disciples made for his protection, ver. 49. When they saw what would follow; that those armed men were come to seize him, they said, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? Thou didst allow us to have two swords, shall we now make use of them? Never more occasion; and to what purpose should we have them, if we do not use them? They asked the question, as if they would not have drawn the sword without commission from their Master, but they were in too much haste, and too much heat to stay for an answer: But Peter aiming at the head of one of the servants of the high priest, missed his blow, and cut off his right ear. As Christ by throwing them to the ground that came to take him, shewed what he could have done, so Peter, by this exploit, shewed what he could have done too, in so good a cause, if he had had leave. The other evangelists tell us what was the check Christ gave to Peter for it. Luke here tells us, (1.) How Christ excused the blow, Suffer ye thus far, ver. 51. Dr. Whitby thinks he said this to his enemies, who came to take him, to qualify them, that they might not be provoked by it to fall upon the disciples, whom he had undertaken the preservation of. Pass by this injury and affront, it was without warrant from me, and there shall not be another blow struck. Though Christ had power to have struck them down, and struck them dead, yet he speaks them fair, and, as it were, begs their pardon, for an assault made upon them by one of his followers, to teach us to give good words, even to our enemies. (2.) How he cured the wound, which was more than amends sufficient for the injury: He touched his ear, and healed him; fastened his ear on again, that he might not so much as go away stigmatized, though he well deserved it. Christ hereby gave them a proof, (1.) Of his power: He that could heal, could destroy, if he pleased, which should have obliged them in interest to submit to him. Had they returned the blow upon Peter, he would immediately have healed him; and what could not a small regiment do, that had such a surgeon to it, immediately to help the sick and wounded? (2.) Of his mercy and goodness. Christ here gave an illustrious example to his own rule, of doing good to them that hate us, as afterwards he did of praying for them that despitefully use us. Those who render good for evil, do as Christ did. One would have thought this generous piece of kindness should have overcome them, that such coals heaped on their heads should have melted them, that they could not have bound him as a malefactor, who had approved himself such a benefactor; but their hearts were hardened.

3. Christ's expostulation with the officers of the detachment, that came to apprehend him, to shew what an absurd thing it was, for them to make all this rout and noise, ver. 52, 53. Matthew relates it, as said to the multitude: Luke tells us it was said to the chief priests, and captains of the temple, who commanded the several orders of the priests, and therefore are here put between the chief priests, and the elders, so that they were all ecclesiasticks, retainers to the temple, who were employed in this odious piece of service; and some of the first rank too, disparaged themselves so far, as to be seen in it.

Now see here,

1. How Christ reasons with them concerning their proceedings: What needed they come out in the dead of the night, and with swords and staves. (1.) They knew that he was one that would not resist, or raise the mob against them, he never had done any thing like that: Why then are ye come out as against a thief?

(2.) They knew he was one that would not abscond, for he was daily with them in the temple, in the midst of them, and never sought to conceal himself, nor did they offer to lay hands on him. Before his hour was come, it was folly for them to think to take him, and when his hour was come, it was folly for them to make all this ado to take him.

2. How he reconciles himself to their proceedings; and this we had not before. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness. How hard soever it may seem, that I should be thus exposed, I submit, for so it is determined; this is the hour allowed you, to have your will against me, there is an hour appointed me to reckon for it. Now the power of darkness, Satan, ruler of the darkness of this world, is permitted to do his worst, to bruise the heel of the seed of the woman, and I resolve to acquiesce; let him do



his worst. *The Lord shall laugh at him, for he sees that his day, his hour, is coming*, Psal. xxxvii. 13. Let this quiet us under the prevalency of the church's enemies; let it quiet us in a dying hour, that, (1.) It is but an *hour* that is permitted for the triumph of our adversary, a short time, a limited time. (2.) It is *their hour*, which is appointed them, and in which they are permitted to try their strength, that omnipotence may be the more glorified in their fall. (3.) It is the *power of darkness* that rides master, and darkness must give way to light, and the power of darkness be made to truckle to the Prince of light. Christ was willing to wait for his triumphs till his warfare was accomplished, and we must be so too.

54. ¶ Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priests house. And Peter followed afar off. 55. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. 56. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. 57. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. 58. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. 59. And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilean. 60. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately while he yet spake, the cock crew. 61. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

We have here the melancholy story of Peter's denying his Master, at the time when he was arraigned before the high priest, with those that were of the *cabal*, that were ready to receive the prey, and to prepare the evidence for his arraignment, *as soon as it was day*, before the great Sanhedrin, ver. 66. But notice is not taken here, as was in the other evangelists, of Christ's being now upon his examination before the high priest, only of his being brought into *the high priest's house*, ver. 54. But the manner of expression is observable, they *took him, and led him, and brought him*, which methinks is like that concerning Saul, 1 Sam. xv. 13. *He is gone about, and passed on, and gone down*, and intimates, that even when they had seized their prey they were in confusion, and for fear of the people, or rather struck with inward terror upon what they had seen and heard, they took him the furthest way about, or rather knew not which way they hurried him, such a hurry were they in in their own bosoms. Now observe,

1. Peter's falling. (1.) It began in *sneaking*. He followed Christ when he was had away prisoner, that was well, and shewed a concern for his Master, but he followed *afar off*, that he might be out of danger. He thought to trim the matter; to follow Christ, and so to satisfy his conscience, but to follow *afar off*, and so to save his reputation, and sleep in a whole skin. (2.) It proceeded in keeping his distance still, and associating himself with the high priest's servants, when he should have been at his Master's elbow. *The servants kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and sat down together*, to talk over their night-expedition. Probably, Malchus was among them, and Peter sat down among them, as if he had been one of them, at least would be thought to be so. (3.) His fall itself was disclaiming all acquaintance with Christ, and relation to him, disowning him because he was now in distress and danger. He was charged by a sorry simple maid, that belonged to the house, with being a retainer to this Jesus, about whom there was now so much noise: she looked wisely upon him as he sat by the fire, only because he was a stranger, and one whom she had not seen before, and concluding that at this time of night there were no neuters there, and knowing him not to be any of the retinue of the high priest, she concludes him to be one of the retinue of this Jesus, or, perhaps, she had been some time or other looking about her in the temple, and had seen Jesus there, and Peter with him, officious about him, and remembered him; and *this man was with him*, faith she. And Peter, as he had not the courage to own the charge, so he had not the wit and presence of mind to turn it off, as he might have done many ways, and therefore flat and plain denies it, *Woman, I know him not*. (4.) His fall was repeated a second time, ver. 58. *After a little while*, before he had time to recollect himself, *another saw him*, and said, *Even thou art one of them*, as slyly as thou fittest here among the high priest's servants: *Not I*, faith Peter, *Man, I am not*. And a third time, *about the space of an hour after* (for, faith the tempter, when he is down, down with him; let us follow the blow, till we get him past recovery) *another confidently affirms, strenuously asserts it, Of a truth this fellow also was with him*, let him deny it if he can, for you may all perceive *he is a Galilean*. But he that has once told

a lye is strongly tempted to persist in it, the *beginning of that sin is as the letting forth of water*. Peter now not only denies that he is a disciple of Christ, but that he knows any thing of him, ver. 60. *Man, I know not what thou sayest*, I never heard of this Jesus.

2. Peter's getting up again. See how happily he recovered himself, or rather the grace of God recovered him. See how it was brought about;

1. The cock crew, just as he was the third time denying that he knew Christ; and this startled him, and put him upon thinking. Note, Small accidents may have great influences.

2. The Lord turned and looked upon him. This circumstance we had not in the other evangelists, but it is a very remarkable one. Christ is here called *the Lord*, for there was much of divine knowledge, power, and grace appearing in this. Observe, Though Christ had now his back upon Peter, and was upon his trial, when, one would think, he had something else to mind, yet he knew all that Peter said. Note, Christ takes more notice of what we say and do than we think he doth, when Peter disowned Christ, yet Christ did not disown him, though he might justly have cast him off, and never looked upon him more, but have denied him before his Father. It is well for us that Christ doth not deal with us as we deal with him. Christ looked upon Peter, not doubting but that Peter would soon be aware of it, for he knew, that though he had denied him with his lips, yet his eye would still be towards him. Observe, Though Peter had now been guilty of a very great offence, and which was very provoking, yet Christ would not call to him, lest he should shame him or expose him, only gave him a look, which none but Peter would understand the meaning of, and it had a great deal in it. (1.) It was a *convincing* look. Peter said he did not know Christ, Christ turned and looked upon him, as if he should say, Dost thou not know me, Peter? Look me in the face and tell me so. (2.) It was a *chiding* look; we may suppose he looked upon him, and frowned, or some way signified his displeasure. Let us think with what an angry countenance Christ justly looks upon us, when we have sinned. (3.) It was an *expostulating*, upbraiding look. What, Peter, art thou he that disownest me now, when thou shouldst come and witness for me? What, thou a disciple? thou that wast the most forward to confess me to be the Son of God, and didst solemnly promise thou wouldst never disown me? (4.) It was a *compassionate* look; he looked upon him with tenderness, poor Peter, how weak is thine heart! how art thou fallen, and undone if I do not help thee! (5.) It was a *directing* look; Christ guided him with his eye, gave him a wink to go out from that sorry company, to retire, and bethink himself a little, and then he would soon see what he had to do. (6.) It was a significant look: it signified the conveying of grace to Peter's heart to enable him to repent; the crowing of the cock would not have brought him to repentance without this look, nor will the external means without special efficacious grace. Power went along with this look to change the heart of Peter, and to bring him to himself, to his right mind.

3. Peter remembered the words of the Lord. Note, The grace of God works in and by the word of God, brings that to mind, and sets that home upon the conscience, and so gives the soul the happy turn. *Tolle & lege*.

4. Then Peter went out, and wept bitterly. One look from Christ, melted him into tears of godly sorrow for sin. The candle was newly put out, and then a little thing lighted it again. Christ looked upon the chief priests, and made no impression upon them as it did on Peter, who had the divine seed remaining in him, to work upon. It was not the look from Christ, but the grace of God with it, that recovered Peter, and brought him to rights.

63. ¶ And the men that held Jesus, mocked him, and smote him. 64. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? 65. And many other things blasphemously spake they against him. 66. ¶ And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, 67. Saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, if I tell you, you will not believe. 68. And if I also ask you, you will not answer me, nor let me go. 69. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. 70. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. 71. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

We are here told, as before, in the other gospels, 1. How our Lord Jesus was abused by the servants of the high priest. *The objects gathered themselves together against him*, the rude and barbarous servants. They that held Jesus, that had him in custody till the court sat, they mocked him, and smote him, ver. 63. they would not allow him to repose himself one minute, though he



had had no sleep all night, nor to *compose* himself, though he was hurried to his trial, and no time given him to prepare for it. They made sport with him; this sorrowful night to him shall be a merry night to them; and the blessed Jesus, like Samson, is made the fool in the play. They *hood-winked* him, and then, according to the common play that young people have among them, they *struck him on the face*, and continued to do so till he named the person that smote him, *ver. 64.* intending hereby an affront to his prophetic office, and that knowledge of several things, which he was said to have. We are not told that he said *any thing*, but *bore every thing*; hell was let loose, and he suffered it to do its worst. A greater indignity could not be done to the blessed Jesus, yet this was but one instance of many; for, *ver. 65.* *many other things blasphemously spake they against him.* They that condemned him for a blasphemer, were themselves the vilest blasphemers that ever were.

2. How he was accused and condemned by the great Sanhedrin, consisting of the *elders of the people, the chief priests, and the scribes*, who were all up betimes, and got together *as soon as it was day*, about five of the clock in the morning, to prosecute this matter. They were *working this evil upon their beds*, and as soon as ever the morning was light, *practised it, Mic. ii. 1.* They would not have been up so early, for any good work.

It is but a short account that we have here of his trial in the ecclesiastical court.

1. They ask him, *Art thou the Christ?* He was generally believed by his followers to be the Christ, but they could not prove it upon him that he had ever said so *totidem verbis*, and therefore urge him to own it to them, *ver. 67.* If they had asked him this question with a willingness to admit that he was the Christ, and to receive him accordingly, if he could give sufficient proof of his being so, it had been *well*, and might have been for ever *well with them.* But they asked it with a resolution not to believe him, but a design to ensnare him.

2. He justly complained of their unfair and unjust usage of him, *ver. 67, 68.* They all, as Jews, professed to expect the Messiah, and to expect him at *this time*, no other appeared, or had appeared, that pretended to be the Messiah, he had no competitor, nor likelihood of any; he had given amazing proofs of a divine power going along with him, which made his claims very well worthy of a free and impartial enquiry; it had been but just for these leaders of the people to have taken him into their council, and examined him there as a *candidate* for the Messiahship, not at the bar as a *criminal*; but, saith he, (1.) *If I tell you, that I am the Christ*, and give you never such convincing proofs of it, you are resolved *you will not believe.* Why should the cause be brought on before you, who have already prejudged it, and are resolved, right or wrong, to run it down, and to condemn it? (2.) *If I ask you what you have to object against the proofs I produce, you will not answer me.* Here he refers to their silence when he put a question to them, which would have led them to own his authority, *chap. xx. 5, 6, 7.* They were neither fair judges, nor fair disputants, but when they were pinched with an argument would rather be silent than own their conviction, *you will neither answer me, nor let me go.* If I be not the Christ, you ought to *answer* the arguments with which I prove that I am; if I be, you ought to *let me go*, but you will do neither.

3. He referred them to his second coming, for the full proof of his being the Christ, to their confusion, since they would not now admit the proof of it to their conviction, *ver. 69.* *Hereafter shall the Son of man sit*, and be seen to sit, *on the right hand of the power of God*, and then you will not need to ask whether he be the Christ or no.

4. Hence they inferred that he set up himself as the Son of God, and asked him *whether he were so or no?* *ver. 70.* *Art thou then the Son of God?* He called himself the *Son of man*, referring to Daniel's vision of the *Son of man* that came near before the *antient of days*, *Dan. vii. 13, 14.* But they understood so much as to know, that if he was *that Son of man*, he was also the *Son of God*, and art thou so? By this it appears to have been the faith of the Jewish church, that the Messiah should be both *Son of man*, and *Son of God.*

5. He owns himself to be the Son of God; *ye say that I am, i. e. I am*, as ye say; compare *Mark xiv. 62.* *Jesus said I am.* This confirms Christ's testimony concerning himself, that he was the Son of God, that he stood to it, when he knew he should suffer for standing to it.

6. Upon this they ground his condemnation, *ver. 71.* *What need we any further witness?* It was true they needed not any further witness to prove that he said he was the *Son of God*, they had it from *his own mouth*, but did they not need proof that he was not so, before they condemned him as a blasphemer for saying that he was so? Had they no apprehension that it was possible he might be so, and then what horrid guilt they should bring upon themselves in putting him to death? No, *they know not, neither will they understand.* They cannot think it possible he should be the Messiah, though never so evidently clothed with divine power and grace, if he appear not as they expect, in worldly pomp and grandeur. Their eyes being blinded with the admiration of that, they rush on in this dangerous prosecution, as the horse into the battle.

## C H A P. XXIII.

*This chapter carries on and concludes the history of Christ's sufferings and death; we have here, (1.) His arraignment before Pilate, the Roman governour, ver. 1—5. (2.) His examination before Herod, who was tetrarch of Galilee, under the Romans likewise, ver. 6—12. (3.) Pilate's struggle with the people to release Jesus, his repeated testimonies concerning his innocency, but his yielding at length to their importunity, and condemning him to be crucified, ver. 13—25. (4.) An account of what passed as they led him to be crucified, and his discourse to the people that followed, ver. 26—34. (5.) An account of what passed at the place of execution, and the indignities done him there, ver. 32—38. (6.) The conversion of one of the thieves, as Christ was hanging on the cross, ver. 39—43. (7.) The death of Christ, and the prodigies that attended it, ver. 44—49. (8.) His burial, ver. 50—56.*

1. **A**ND the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. 2. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cesar, saying, that he himself is Christ a king. 3. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. 4. Then said Pilate to the chief priests, and to the people, I find no fault in this man. 5. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. 6. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. 7. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herods jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself was also at Jerusalem at that time. 8. ¶ And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. 9. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. 10. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. 11. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. 12. ¶ And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves.

Our Lord Jesus was condemned as a blasphemer in the spiritual court, but it was the most *impotent malice* that could be, that that court was acted by, for when they had condemned him they knew they could not *put him to death*, and therefore take another course.

First, They accuse him before Pilate; the *whole multitude of them arose*, when they saw they could go no further with him in their court, and *led him unto Pilate*, though it was no judgment day, no assizes, or sessions, and they *demand justice* against him, not as a blasphemer, that was no crime that he took cognizance of, but as one *disaffected to the Roman government*; which they in their hearts did not look upon as any crime at all, or if it were one, they themselves were much more chargeable with it, than he was; only, it would serve the turn, and answer the purpose of their malice; and it is observable, that that which was the *pretended crime*, for which they employed the Roman powers to destroy Christ, was the *real crime*, for which the Roman powers, not long after, destroyed them.

1. Here is the indictment drawn up against him, *ver. 2.* in which they pretended a zeal for Cesar, only to ingratiate themselves with Pilate, but it was all *malice* against Christ, and nothing else. They misrepresented him, (1.) As making the people *rebel against Cesar.* It was true, and Pilate knew it, that there was a general uneasiness in the people under the Roman yoke, and they wanted nothing but an opportunity to shake it off; now they would have Pilate believe, that this Jesus was active to foment that general discontent, which, if the truth were known, they themselves were the aiders and abettors of, *We have found him perverting the nation*; as if converting them to God's government were *perverting them* from the civil government; whereas nothing tends more to make men good subjects than making them Christ's faithful followers. Christ had particularly taught that they *ought to give tribute to Cesar*, though he knew there were those that would be offended at him for it, and yet he is here falsely accused,



as forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar. Innocency is no fence against calumny. (2.) As making himself a rival with Cæsar, though the very reason why they rejected him, and would not own him to be the Messiah, was because he did not appear in worldly pomp and power, and did not set up for a temporal prince, nor offer to do any thing against Cæsar; yet that is it they charge him with, that he said, *He himself is Christ a king*. He did say, he was *Christ*, and if so, then a king, but not such a king as was ever likely to give disturbance to Cæsar. When his followers would have made him a king, *Joh. vi. 15.* he declined it, though, by the many miracles he wrought, he made it appear, that if he would have set up in competition with Cæsar, he would have been too hard for him.

2. His pleading to the indictment. *Pilate asked him, Art thou the king of the Jews?* ver. 3. To which he answered, *Thou sayest it*, i. e. It is as thou sayest, that I am entitled to the government of the Jewish nation, but in rivalry with the scribes and Pharisees, who tyrannize over them in matters of religion, not in rivalry with Cæsar, whose government relates only to their civil interests. Christ's kingdom is wholly spiritual, and will not interfere with Cæsar's jurisdiction. Or, *Thou sayest it*; but canst thou prove it? What evidence hast thou for it? All that know him know the contrary, that he never pretended to be the king of the Jews, in opposition to Cæsar as supreme, or to the governors, that were sent by him, but the contrary.

3. Pilate's declaration of his innocency, ver. 4. He said to the chief priests, and the people that seemed to join with them in the prosecution, *I find no fault in this man*. What breaches of your law he may have been guilty of, I am not concerned to enquire, but I find nothing proved upon him, that makes him obnoxious to our court.

4. The continued fury and outrage of the prosecutors, ver. 5. Instead of being moderated by Pilate's declaration of his innocency, and considering, as they ought to do, whether they were not bringing the guilt of innocent blood upon themselves, they were the more exasperated; more exceeding fierce. We do not find that they have any particular fact to produce, much less any evidence to prove it; but they resolve to carry it with noise and confidence, and say it, though they cannot prove it, *He stirs up the people to rebel against Cæsar, teaching throughout all Judea; beginning from Galilee, to this place*. He did stir up the people, but it was not to any thing factious or seditious, but to every thing that was virtuous and praise-worthy. He did teach, but they could not charge him with teaching any doctrine, that tended to disturb the publick peace, or make the government uneasy, or jealous.

Secondly, They accuse him before Herod.

1. Pilate removed him and his cause to Herod's court. The accusers mentioned Galilee, the northern part of Canaan; why, saith Pilate, is he of that country? Is he a Galilean? ver. 6. Yes, said they, that is his head quarters; there he hath spent most of his time; let us send him to Herod then (saith Pilate) for Herod is now in town, and it is but fit he should have cognizance of his cause, since he belongs to Herod's jurisdiction. Pilate was already sick of the cause, and desirous to rid his hands of it, and that seems to be the true reason of sending him to Herod. But, God ordered it so, for the more evident fulfilling of the scripture, as appears, *Acts iv. 26, 27.* where that of David, *Psal. ii. 2.* *The kings of the earth and the rulers, set themselves against the Lord and his anointed*, is expressly said to be fulfilled in Herod and Pontius Pilate.

2. Herod was very willing to have the examining of him, ver. 8. *When he saw Jesus he was exceeding glad*, and perhaps the more glad because he saw him a prisoner, saw him in bonds; He had heard many things of him in Galilee, where his miracles had for a great while been all the talk of the country, and he longed to see him; not for any affection he had for him, or his doctrine, but purely out of curiosity; and it was only to gratify that, that he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him, which would serve him to talk of as long as he lived. And in order to this, he questioned with him in many things, that at length he might bring him to something, in which he might shew his power. Perhaps he pumped him concerning things secret, or things to come, or concerning his curing of diseases. But Jesus answered him nothing; nor would he gratify him so much as with the repetition of one miracle. The poorest beggar that asked a miracle for the relief of his necessity, was never denied; but this proud prince, that asked a miracle merely for the gratifying of his curiosity, is denied; he might have seen Christ and his wondrous works many a time in Galilee, and would not, and therefore it is justly said, now he would see them and shall not; they are hid from his eyes, because he knew not the day of his visitation. Herod thought now he had him in bonds he might command a miracle, but miracles must not be made cheap, nor omnipotence be at the beck of the greatest potentate.

3. His prosecutors appeared against him before Herod, for they were restless in the prosecution; they stood and vehemently accused him, ver. 10. *impudently and boldly*, so the word signifies. They would make Herod believe that he had poisoned Galilee too, with his seditious notions. Note, It is no new thing for good men and good ministers, that are real and useful friends to the civil

government to be falsely accused as factious and seditious, and enemies to government.

4. Herod was very abusive to him; he, with his men of war, his attendants and officers, and great men, set him at nought. They made nothing of him, so the word is: Horrid wickedness to make nothing of him, who made all things. They laughed at him as a fool, for they knew he had wrought many miracles to befriend others, and why would he not now work one to befriend himself? or else as one that had lost his power, and was become weak as other men: Herod, that had been acquainted with John Baptist, and had more knowledge of Christ too, than Pilate had, was more abusive to Christ than Pilate was: for knowledge without grace, doth but make men the more ingeniously wicked. Herod arrayed Christ in a gorgeous robe, some gaudy, painted clothes, as a mock-king; and so he taught Pilate's soldiers afterwards to do him the same indignity. He was ring-leader in that abuse.

5. Herod returned him to Pilate, and it proved an occasion of the making of them friends, they having been for some time before at variance. Herod could not get sight of a miracle, but would not condemn him neither, as a malefactor, and therefore sent him again to Pilate, ver. 11. and so returned Pilate's civility and respect in sending the prisoner to him; and this mutual obligation, with the messages that passed between them on this occasion, brought them to a better understanding one of another, than there had been of late between them, ver. 12. They had been at enmity between themselves, probably upon Pilate's killing the Galileans, who were Herod's subjects, *Luk. xiii. 1.* or some other such matter of controversy as uses to be among princes and great men. Observe how those that quarrelled with one another, yet could unite against Christ, as Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, though divided among themselves were confederate against the Israel of God, *Psal. lxxxiii. 7.* Christ is the great peace-maker; both Pilate and Herod owned his innocency, and their agreeing in that, cured their disagreeing in other things.

13. ¶ And Pilate when he had called together the chief priests, and the rulers, and the people, 14. Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and behold, I having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him; 15. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him, and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. 16. I will therefore chastise him, and release him. 17. For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast. 18. And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: 19. (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder was cast in prison) 20. Pilate therefore willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. 21. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. 22. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. 23. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified: and the voices of them, and of the chief priests prevailed. 24. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. 25. And he released unto them, him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

We have here the blessed Jesus run down by the mob, and hurried to the cross in the storm of a popular noise and tumult, raised by the malice and artifice of the chief priests, as agents for the prince of the power of the air.

1. Pilate solemnly protests that he believes he has done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. And if he did believe so, he ought immediately to have discharged him, and not only so, but to have protected him from the fury of the priests and rabble, and to have bound his prosecutors to their good behaviour for their insolent carriage. But being himself an ill man, he had no kindness for Christ. And having made himself otherwise obnoxious, was afraid of displeasing either the emperor or the people, and therefore, for want of integrity, he called together the chief priests, and rulers, and people. Whom he should have dispersed, as a riotous, routous, and seditious assembly, and forbid them to come near him; and will hear what they have to say, to whom he should have turned a deaf ear, for he plainly saw what spirit acted them, ver. 14. *You have brought (saith he) this man to me*, and because I have a respect for you, *I have examined him before you*, and have heard all you have to alledge against him, and I can make nothing of it, *I find no fault in him*, you cannot prove the things whereof you accuse him.



2. He appeals to Herod concerning him, *ver. 15. I sent you to him, who is supposed to have known more of him than I have done, and he hath sent him back, not convicted of any thing, nor under any mark of his displeasure; in his opinion his crimes are not capital. He has laughed at him as a weak man, but has not stigmatized him as a dangerous man; he thought Bedlam a fitter place for him than Tyburn.*

3. He proposeth to release him, if they will but consent to it. He ought to have done it without asking leave of them, *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum.* But the fear of man brings many into this snare, that whereas justice should take place, though heaven and earth come together, they will do an unjust thing against their consciences rather than pull an old house about their ears. Pilate declares him innocent, and therefore has a mind to release him, yet, to please the people, (1.) He will release him under the notion of a malefactor, because *of necessity he must release one,* *ver. 17.* so that whereas he ought to have been released by an *act of justice*, and thanks to nobody, he would have him released by an *act of grace*, and not be beholden to the people for it. (2.) He will *chastise* him and release him. If *no fault* be to be found in him, why should he be chastised? there is as much injustice in scourging as in crucifying an innocent man; nor would it be justified by pretending, that this would satisfy the clamours of the people, and make him the object of their pity, who was now to be the object of their envy. We must not do evil that good may come.

4. The people chuse rather to have Barabbas released; a wretched fellow, that had nothing to recommend himself to their favour, but the daringness of his crimes: he was imprisoned for a *sedition made in the city*, and for *murther*, of all crimes among men the least pardonable, yet this was the criminal that was preferred before Christ, *ver. 18, 19. Away with this man and release unto us Barabbas:* And no wonder, that such a man is the favourite and darling of such a mob, he that was really seditious, rather than he that was really loyal, and falsely accused of sedition.

5. When Pilate urged the second time that Christ should be released, they cried out *crucify him, crucify him, ver. 20, 21.* They not only will have him die, but will have him die so great a death; nothing less will serve, but he must be crucified. *Crucify him, crucify him.*

6. When Pilate the third time reasoned with them, to shew them the unreasonableness and injustice of it, they were the more peremptory and outrageous, *ver. 22. Why? what evil hath he done?* Name his crime: *I have found no cause of death*, and you cannot say what cause of death you have found in him, and therefore if you will but speak the word, *I will chastise him and let him go.* But popular fury, the more it is complimented, the more furious it grows, they were *instant with loud voices*, with great noises, or outcries, not requesting, but *requiring that he might be crucified*; as if they had as much right at the feast to demand the crucifying of one that was innocent, as the release of one that was guilty.

7. Pilate's yielding at length to their importunity. The voice of the people and of the *chief priests, prevailed*, and were too hard for Pilate, and overruled him to go contrary to his convictions and inclination. He had not courage to go against so strong a stream, but *gave sentence that it should be as they required,* *ver. 24.* Here is judgment turned away backward, and *justice standing afar off*, for fear of popular fury: *Truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter, Isa. lix. 14.* Judgment was looked for, but *behold oppression, righteousness but behold a cry, Isa. v. 7.* This is repeated, *ver. 25.* with the aggravating circumstance of the release of Barabbas; *He released unto them him, that for sedition and murther was cast into prison*, who hereby would be hardened in his wickedness, and do the more mischief, because *him they had desired*, being altogether such an one as themselves, but he *delivered Jesus to their will*; and he could not deal more barbarously with him, than to deliver him to *their will*, who hated him with a *perfect hatred*, and whose *tender mercies* were cruelty.

26. And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. 27. ¶ And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. 28. But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. 29. For behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. 30. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. 31. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

We have here the blessed Jesus, the Lamb of God, led as a lamb to the slaughter, to the sacrifice. It is strange with what No, xcii.

expedition they went through his trial; how they could do so much work in so little time, though they had so many great men to deal with, attendance on whom useth to be a work of time. He was brought before the chief priests at break of day, *chap. xxii. 66.* after that to Pilate, then to Herod, then to Pilate again, and there seems to have been a long struggle between Pilate and the people about him. He was scourged and crowned with thorns, and contumeliously used, and all this was done in four or five hours time, or six at most, for he was crucified between nine a clock and twelve. Christ's persecutors resolve to lose no time, for fear lest his friends at the other end of the town should get notice of what they were doing, and should rise to rescue him. Never any one was so *chased out of the world* as Christ was, but so he himself said, *Yet a little while, and ye shall not see me*, a very little while indeed.

Now as they led him away to death, we find,

1. One that was a *bearer*, that carried his cross, Simon by name, a Cyrenian, who probably was a friend of Christ, and was known to be so, and this was done to put a reproach upon him; they laid Christ's cross upon him, that he might *bear it after Jesus*, *ver. 26.* lest Jesus should faint under it, and die away, and so prevent the further instances of malice they designed. It was a pity, but a *cruel pity*, that gave him this ease.

2. Many that were *mourners*, true mourners, who followed him *bewailing and lamenting* him. These were not only his friends and well-wishers, but the common people that were not his enemies, and were moved with compassion towards him, because they had heard the fame of him, and what an excellent useful man he was, and had reason to think he suffered unjustly; this drew a great crowd after him, as is usual at executions, especially of those that have been persons of distinction. *A great company of people followed him*, especially of women, *ver. 27.* some led by pity, others by curiosity, but they *also* (as well as those that were his particular friends and acquaintance) *bewailed and lamented him.* Though there were many that reproached and reviled him, yet there were that valued him, and pitied him, and were sorry for him, and were partakers with him in his sufferings. The dying of the Lord Jesus, may perhaps move natural affections in many, that are strangers to devout affections; many bewail Christ that do not believe in him, and lament him, that do not love him above all.

Now here we are told what Christ said to these mourners, though one would think he should be wholly taken up with his own concern, yet he found time and heart to take cognizance of their tears. Christ *died lamented*, and has a bottle for the tears of those that lamented him. He *turned to them*, though they were strangers to him, and bid them *not weep for him, but for themselves*; he diverts their lamentation into another chanel, *ver. 28.*

1. He gives them a general direction concerning their lamentations. *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me*, not that they were to be blamed for weeping for him, but commended rather; those hearts were hard indeed, that were not affected with such sufferings of such a person; but they must not weep only for him, those were profitless tears that they shed for him, but rather let them *weep for themselves and for their children*, with an eye to the destruction that was coming upon Jerusalem, which some of them might live to see, and share in the calamities of, or at least their children would, for whom they ought to be solicitous. Note, When with an eye of faith we behold Christ crucified, we ought to weep, not for him but for ourselves. We must not be affected with the death of Christ as with the death of a common person, whose calamity we pity, or of a common friend, whom we are like to part with; the death of Christ was a thing peculiar, it was his victory and triumph over his enemies, it was our deliverance, and the purchase of eternal life for us. And therefore weep not for him, but let us weep for our own sins, and the sins of our children, that were the cause of his death; and weep for fear (such were the tears here prescribed) of the miseries we shall bring upon ourselves if we slight his love, and reject his grace, as the Jewish nation did, which brought upon them the ruin here foretold. When our dear relations and friends die in Christ, we have no reason to weep for them who have put off the burthen of the flesh, and made perfect in holiness, and are entered into perfect rest and joy, but for ourselves and our children, who are left behind in a world of sins, and sorrows and snares.

2. He gives them a particular reason why they should *weep for themselves and for their children.* For *behold*, sad times are coming upon your city, it will be destroyed, and you will be involved in the common destruction. When Christ's own disciples sorrowed after a *godly sort* for his leaving them, he wiped away their tears with the promise that he would *see them again*, and they should *rejoice*, John xvi. 22. But when these daughters of Jerusalem bewailed him only with a *worldly sorrow*, he turned their tears into another chanel, and told them they should have something given them to cry for. Let them *be afflicted, and mourn, and weep*, Jam. iv. 9. He had lately wept over Jerusalem himself, and now he bids them weep over it. Christ's tears should set us a weeping. Let the daughters of Zion that own Christ for their king, rejoice in him, for he comes to save them; but



but let the daughters of Jerusalem that only weep for him, but do not take him for their king, weep and tremble to think of his coming to judge them.

Now the destruction of Jerusalem is here foretold by two proverbial sayings that might then fitly be used, which both speak it very terrible, that what people commonly dread they would then desire, to be *written childless*, and to be *buried alive*. (1.) They would wish to be *written childless*. Whereas, commonly those that have no children, envy those that have, as Rachel envied Leah, then those that have children will find them such a burthen in attempting to escape, and such a grief when they see them either *fainting* for famine, or *falling* by the sword, that they will envy those that have none, and say, *Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare*, that have no children to be *given* him to the murderer, or to be *snatched* out of his hands. It would not only go ill with those, who at that time were *with child* or *giving suck*, as Christ had said, *Matt. xxiv. 19.* but it would be terrible to those who ever had had children, and suckled them, and had them now alive. See *Hof. ix. 11, 12, 13, 14.* See the vanity of the creature, and the uncertainty of its comforts, for such may be the changes of providence concerning us, that those very things may become the greatest burthens, cares and griefs to us, which we have delighted in as the greatest blessings. (2.) They would wish to be *buried alive*, ver. 30. They shall begin to *say to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us.* This also refers to a passage in the same prophecy with the former, *Hof. x. 8.* They shall wish to be hid in the darkest caves, that they might be out of the noise of these calamities. They will be willing to be sheltered upon any terms, though with the hazard of being crushed to pieces. This would be the language, especially of the great and mighty men, *Rev. vi. 16.* They that would not flee to Christ for refuge, and put themselves under his protection, will in vain call to *hills* and *mountains* to shelter themselves from his wrath.

3. He shews how natural it was for them, to infer that desolation from his sufferings, ver. 31. *If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* Some think, this is borrowed from *Ezek. xx. 47.* *The fire shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree.* These words may be applied, (1.) More particularly to the destruction of Jerusalem, which Christ here foretold, and which the Jews by putting him to death brought upon themselves. *If they, i. e. the Jews, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, do these things upon the green tree, if they do thus abuse an innocent and excellent person for his good works, how may they expect God to deal with them for their so doing, who have made themselves a dry tree, a corrupt and wicked generation, and good for nothing? If this be their sin, what do you think will be their punishment? Or take it thus; if they i. e. the Romans, their judges, and their soldiers, abuse me thus, who have given them no provocation, who am to them as a green tree, which you seem to be as much enraged at, what will they do by Jerusalem, and the Jewish nation; who will be so very provoking to them, and make themselves as a dry tree, as fuel to the fire of their resentments. If God suffer those things to be done to me, what will he appoint to be done to those barren trees, of whom it had been often said, that they should be *hewn down* and *cast into the fire*, *Matt. iii. 10. — vii. 19.* (2.) It may be applied more generally, to all the revelations of God's wrath against sin and sinners. If God deliver me up to such sufferings as these, because I am made a sacrifice for sin, what will he do with sinners themselves? Christ was a *green tree* fruitful and flourishing; now if such things were done to him, we may from thence infer, what should have been done to the whole race of mankind, if he had not *interposed*, and what shall be done to those that continue dry trees, notwithstanding all that is done to make them fruitful: If God did this to the Son of his love, when he found but sin imputed to him, what shall he do to the generation of his wrath, when he finds sin reigning in them? If the Father were pleased in doing these things to the green tree, why should he be loth to do it to the dry? Note, The consideration of the bitter sufferings of our Lord Jesus, should engage us to stand in awe of the justice of God, and to tremble before him. The best saints compared with Christ are *dry trees*, if he suffer, why may not they expect to suffer? and what then shall the damnation of sinners be?*

32. And there were also two other malefactors led with him to be put to death. 33. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors; one on the right hand, and the other on the left. 34. ¶ Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. 35. And the people stood beholding: and the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ the chosen of God. 36. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, 37. And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. 38. And a super-

scription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 39. ¶ And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thy self and us. 40. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41. And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

In these verses we have,

1. Divers passages which we had before in Matthew and Mark, concerning Christ's sufferings.

(1.) That there were *two other malefactors led with him* to the place of execution; who, it is probable, had been for some time under sentence of death, and were designed to be executed as this day, which was probably the pretence for making such haste in the prosecution of Christ, that he and these two malefactors might be executed together and one solemnity might serve.

(2.) That he was crucified at a place called Calvary, Κραβίον, the Greek name for Golgotha the place of a *scull*: an ignominious place, to add to the reproach of his sufferings, but significant, for there he triumphed over death as it were upon his own dunghill. He was *crucified*, i. e. his hands and feet were nailed to the cross, as it lay upon the ground; and then it was *lifted* up, and fastened into the earth or some socket to receive it. This was a painful and shameful death, above any other.

(3.) That he was crucified *in the midst between two thieves*, as if he had been the worst of the three; thus he was not only treated as a transgressor, but *numbered with them*, the worst of them.

(4.) That the soldiers who were employed in the execution, seized his garments as their fee, and divided them among themselves *by lot*; they *parted his raiment and cast lots*; it was worth so little that if it were divided it would come to next nothing, and therefore they cast lots for it.

(5.) That he was reviled, and reproached, and treated with all the scorn and contempt imaginable, when he was *lifted up* upon the cross. It was strange that so much barbarity should be found in the human nature: *The people stood beholding*, not at all concerned, but rather pleasing themselves with the spectacle; and *the rulers* whom from their office one would take to be men of sense, and men of honour, they stood among the rabble and *derided him*, to set those on that were about them, to do so too: And they said, *He saved others, let him save himself.* Thus is he upbraided for the good works he had done, as it were indeed for *these* that they *crucified* him. They triumph over him as if they had conquered him, whereas he was himself then more than a conqueror; they challenge him to save himself from the cross, when he was saving others by the cross. *If he be the Christ the chosen of God, let him save himself.* They knew that the *Christ* is the *chosen of God*; designed by him and dear to him. If he as the Christ would deliver our nation from the Romans (and they could not form any other idea, but that, of the Messiah) let him deliver himself from the Romans, that have him now in their hands. Thus the Jewish *rulers* jeered him as captivated by the Romans instead of subduing them: The *Roman soldiers* jeered him as *the king of the Jews*; a people good enough for such a prince, and a prince good enough for such a people. They *mocked him*, ver. 36, 37. they made sport with him, and made a jest of his sufferings; and when they were drinking sharp, sour wine themselves, such as was generally allotted them, they triumphantly asked him if he would pledge them, or drink with them. And they said, *If thou be the king of the Jews, save thy self*; for as the Jews prosecuted him under the notion of a pretended Messiah, so the Romans under the notion of a pretended king.

6. That the superscription over his head setting forth his crime, was, *This is the king of the Jews*, ver. 38. He is put to death for pretending to be the king of the Jews, so they meant it; but God intended it to be a declaration of what he really was, notwithstanding his present disgrace: he is *the king of the Jews*, the king of the church, and his cross is the way to his crown. This was written in those that are called the *three learned languages*, *Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew*, for those are best learned that have learned Christ. It was written in these three languages that it might be known and read of all men; but God designed by it, to signify that the gospel of Christ should be preached to all nations *beginning at Jerusalem*, and be read in all languages. The Gentile philosophy made the Greek tongue famous, the Roman laws and government made the Latin tongue so, and the Hebrew excelled them all for the sake of the Old Testament. In these three languages, is Jesus Christ *proclaimed king*. Young scholars that are taking pains at school to make themselves masters of these three languages should aim at this, that in the use of them they may increase their acquaintance with Christ.



2. Here are two passages which we had not before, and they are very remarkable ones.

1. Christ's prayer for his enemies, *ver. 34. Father, forgive them.* These are very remarkable words Christ spoke after he was nailed to the cross, and before he died, and this is the first. One reason why he died the death of the cross was, that he might have liberty of speech to the last, and so might glorify his Father, and edify the world about him. As soon as ever he was fastened to the cross, or while they were nailing him, he prayed this prayer: in which he serves;

1. The petition. *Father, forgive them*; one would think he could have prayed, Father, consume them, the Lord look upon them, and requite it: The sin they were now guilty of might justly have been made unpardonable, and justly might they have been excepted by name out of the act of indemnity. No, these are particularly *prayed for*. Now he made intercession for transgressors, as was foretold, *Isa. liii. 12.* and it is to be added to his prayer, *John xvii.* to complete the specimen he gave of his intercession within the veil: that for saints, this for sinners. Now the sayings of Christ upon the cross, as well as his sufferings had a further reach than they seemed to have. This was a mediatorial word, and explicatory of the intent and meaning of his death, *Father, forgive them*, not only these, but all that shall repent and believe the gospel, and he did not intend that these should be forgiven upon any other terms. Father, that which I am now suffering and dying for, is in order to this, that poor sinners may be pardoned. Note, 1. The great thing which Christ died to purchase and procure for us, is the forgiveness of sin. 2. This is at which Christ intercedes for, for all that repent and believe in the virtue of his satisfaction; his blood speaks this, *Father, forgive them*. 3. The greatest sinners, may, through Christ, upon their repentance, hope to find mercy. Farther, *forgive them*, though they were his persecutors and murderers.

2. The plea; *For they know not what they do*: for, *if they had known*, they would not have crucified him, *1 Cor. ii. 8.* There was a veil upon his glory, and upon their understandings, and how could they see through two veils? They wished his blood on them and their children, but had they known what they did, they would have unwished it again. Note, 1. The crucifiers of Christ *know not what they do*: They that speak ill of religion, speak ill of that which they know not, and it is because they will not know. (2.) There is a kind of ignorance that doth in part excuse men: ignorance through want of the means of knowledge, or of a capacity to receive instruction, through the infelicities of education, or inadvertency. The crucifiers of Christ were kept in ignorance by their rulers, and had prejudices against him instilled into them, so that in what they did against Christ and his doctrine, they thought they did God service, *John xvi. 2.* Such are to be pitied and prayed for. This prayer of Christ was answered not long after, when many of those that had a hand in his death were converted by Peter's preaching.

This is written also for example to us. (1.) We must, in prayer, call God Father, and come to him with reverence and confidence, as children to a father. (2.) The great thing we must beg of God, both for ourselves and others, is, the forgiveness of sins. (3.) We must pray for *our enemies*, and those that hate and persecute us; must extenuate their offences, and not aggravate them, as we must our own; *they know not what they do*;  *peradventure it was an oversight*; and must be earnest with God in prayer for the forgiveness of their sins, their sins against us. This is Christ's example to his own rule, *Matth. v. 44, 45. Love your enemies*; and it very much strengthens the rule, for if Christ loved and prayed for such enemies, what enemies can we have which we are not obliged to love and pray for?

2. The conversion of the thief upon the cross, which is an illustrious instance of Christ's triumphing over principalities and powers then, when he seemed to be triumphed over by them. Christ was crucified between two thieves, and in them was represented the different effects which the cross of Christ would have upon the children of men, to whom it would be brought near in the preaching of the gospel. They are all malefactors, all guilty before God. Now the cross of Christ is to some a *savour of life* to life, to others of *death unto death*. To them that perish it is foolishness, but to them that are saved it is the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

1. Here was one of these malefactors that was *hardened to the cross*. At the cross of Christ he *railed on him*, as others did, *ver. 39.* he said, *If thou be the Christ*, as they say thou art, *save thyself and us*. Though he was now in pain and agony, and in the valley of the shadow of death, yet that did not humble his proud spirit, nor teach him to give good language, no, not to his low-sufferer. *Though thou bray a fool in a mortar, yet will his foolishness depart from him*. No troubles will of themselves work a change in a wicked heart, but sometimes they *irritate* the corruption, which one would think they should *mortify*. He challenged Christ to *save both himself and them*. Note, There are some that have the impudence to rail upon Christ, and yet the confidence to expect to be saved by him; nay, and to conclude, that if he do not save them, he is not to be looked upon as the Saviour.

2. Here was the other of them that was *softened at the last*. It was said in Matthew and Mark, that though the *thieves*, even *they that were crucified with him, reviled him*, which some think is by a figure put for one of them; but others think they both *reviled him at first*, till the heart of one of them was wonderfully changed, and with it his language on a sudden. This malefactor, when just ready to fall into the hands of Satan, was snatched as a brand out of the burning, and made a monument of divine mercy and grace, and Satan was left to roar as a lion disappointed of his prey. This gives no encouragement to any, to put off their repentance to their death-bed, or to hope that then they shall find mercy; for though it is certain that true repentance is never too late, it is as certain that late repentance is seldom true. None can be sure that they shall have time to repent at death, but every man may be sure he cannot have the advantages that this penitent thief had, whose case was altogether extraordinary. He never had any offer of Christ, nor day of grace before now: he was designed to be made a singular instance of the power of Christ's grace, now at a time when he was *crucified in weakness*. Christ having conquered Satan in the destruction of Judas, and the preservation of Peter, erects this further trophy of his victory over him, in the conversion of this malefactor, as a specimen of what he would do.

We shall see the case extraordinary, if we observe,

1. The extraordinary operations of God's grace upon him, which appeared in what he said. Here were so many evidences given in a short time of a blessed change wrought in him, as that more could not have been given in so little a compass.

1. See what he said to the other malefactor, *ver. 40, 41.* (1.) He reproved him for railing on Christ, as destitute of the *fear of God*, and having no sense at all of religion. *Dost not thou fear God?* This implies that it was the fear of God which restrained him from following the multitude to do this evil. I fear God, and therefore dare not do it, and dost not thou? All that have their eyes opened, see this to be at the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked, that they have not the fear of God before their eyes. If thou hadst any humanity in thee, thou wouldest not insult over one that is thy fellow-sufferer; *thou art in the same condition*; thou art a *dying man* too, and therefore whatever these wicked people do, it ill becomes thee to abuse a dying man. (2.) He owns that he deserved what was done to him. *We indeed justly*, it is likely they both suffered for one and the same crime, and therefore he spake with the more assurance, *We receive the due reward of our deeds*. This magnifies divine grace, as acting in a distinguishing way: These two had been comrades in sin and suffering, and yet one is *saved*, and the other *perisheth*; two that had gone together all along hitherto, and yet now *one taken, and the other left*. He doth not say *thou indeed justly, but we*. Note, True penitents acknowledge the justice of God, in all the punishments of their sin. God has *done right*, but *we have done wickedly*. (3.) He believes Christ to have suffered *wrongfully*. Though he was condemned in two courts, and run upon as if he had been the worst of malefactors, yet this penitent thief is convinced by his carriage in his sufferings, that *he has done nothing amiss*. The chief priest would have him crucified *between* the malefactors, as *one of them*, but this thief has more sense than they, and owns he is *none of them*, *ὅτι ἐν ἁτομίᾳ*, nothing absurd or unbecoming his character. Whether he had before heard of Christ, and of his wondrous works, doth not appear, but the Spirit of grace enlightened him with this knowledge, and enabled him to say, this man has *done nothing amiss*.

2. See what he said to our Lord Jesus, *ver. 42. Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*. This is the prayer of a *dying sinner*, to a *dying Saviour*. It was the honour of Christ to be *thus prayed to*, though he was upon the cross reproached and reviled; it was the happiness of the thief *thus to pray*; perhaps he never prayed before, and yet now was heard and saved at the last gasp. While there is life, there is hope; and while there is hope, there is room for prayer.

1. Observe his *faith* in this prayer. In his confession of sin, *ver. 44.* He discovered *repentance towards God*. In this petition he discovered *faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*. He owns him to be *Lord*, and to have a *kingdom*, and that he was going to that kingdom; that he should have authority in that kingdom, and that those should be happy whom he favours; and to *believe* and *confess* all this was a *great thing* at this time of day. Christ was now in the depth of disgrace, deserted by his own disciples, reviled by his own nation, suffering as a pretender, and not delivered by his Father: He made his profession before those prodigies happened, which put honour upon his sufferings, and which startled the centurion; yet *verily we have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel*. He believed *another life* after this, and desired to be happy in *that* life, not as the other thief, to be *saved from the cross*, but to be well done for, when the cross had done its worst.

2. Observe his *humility* in this prayer. All his request is, *Lord, remember me*; He doth not pray, *Lord, prefer me*; as they did, *Matth. xx. 21.* though he having the honour so as none of the disciples had, to drink of Christ's cup, and to be baptized with his



his baptism either *on his right hand*, or *on his left* in his sufferings, when his own disciples had deserted him, he might have had some colour to ask as they did, to sit on his right hand, and on his left, in his kingdom; acquaintance in sufferings hath sometimes gained such a point, *Jer. lii. 41, 32*. But he is far from the thought of it, all he begs is, *Lord, remember me*, referring himself to Christ in what way to remember him. It is a request like that of *Joseph to the chief butler, think on me*, *Gen xl. 14*. and it sped better, the chief butler forgot *Joseph*, but Christ remembered this thief.

3. There is an air of importunity and fervency in this prayer. He doth, as it were, breathe out his soul in it. *Lord, remember me*, and I have enough; I desire no more; into thy hands I commit my case. Note, To be remembered by Christ now he is in his kingdom, is what we should earnestly desire and pray for, and it will be enough to secure our welfare, living and dying. Christ is *in his kingdom* interceding, *Lord, remember me*, and intercede for me. He is there ruling, *Lord, remember me*, and rule in me by thy Spirit. He is there preparing places for those that are his, *Lord, remember me*, and prepare a place for me; remember me at death, remember me in the resurrection. See *Job xiv. 13*.

2. The extraordinary grants of Christ's favour to him; *Jesus said unto him*, in answer to his prayer, *Verily I say unto thee*, I the Amen, the faithful witness, I say amen to this prayer, put my fiat to it: nay, thou shalt have more than thou didst ask, *This day thou shalt be with me in paradise*, ver. 43. Observe,

1. To whom this was spoken. To the penitent thief, to him, and not to his companion: Christ upon the cross, is like Christ upon the throne, for *now is the judgment of this world*, one departs with a curse, the other with a blessing. Though Christ was now himself in the greatest struggle and agony, yet he had a word of comfort to speak to a poor penitent, that committed himself to him. Note, Even great sinners, if they be true penitents, shall, through Christ, obtain not only the pardon of their sins, but a place in the paradise of God, *Heb. ix. 15*. This magnifies the riches of free grace, that rebels and traitors shall not only be pardoned but preferred, thus preferred.

2. By whom this was spoken: This was another mediatorial word which Christ spoke, though upon a particular occasion, yet with a general intention to explain the true intent and meaning of his sufferings, as he died to purchase the *forgiveness of sins* for us, ver. 34. so also to purchase *eternal life* for us. By this word we are given to understand that Jesus Christ died to *open the kingdom of heaven to all penitent, obedient believers*.

1. Christ here lets us know that he was going to paradise himself; to *hades*, to the invisible world; his human soul was removing to the place of separate souls; not to the place of the damned, but to paradise, the place of the blessed. By this he assures us that his satisfaction was accepted, and the Father was well pleased in him, else he had not gone to paradise, that was the beginning of the joy set before him, which he comforted himself with the prospect of. He went by the cross to the crown, and we must not think of going any other way, or of being perfected but by sufferings.

2. He lets all penitent believers know, that when they die, they shall go to be with him there. He was now as a priest purchasing this happiness for them, and is ready, as a king, to confer it upon them, when they are prepared and made ready for it. See here how the happiness of heaven is set forth to us. (1.) It is *paradise*, a garden of pleasure, the *paradise of God*, *Rev. ii. 7*. alluding to the garden of Eden, in which our first parents were placed when they were innocent. In the second Adam we are restored to all we lost in the first Adam, and more, to a heavenly paradise, instead of an earthly one. (2.) It is being *with Christ* there. That is the happiness of heaven, to see Christ, and sit with him, and share in his glory, *John xvii. 24*. (3.) It is immediate upon death. *This day thou shalt be with me*; to night, before to morrow. *The souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burthen of the flesh, immediately are in joy and felicity*; the spirits of just men immediately are made perfect. Lazarus departs, and is comforted presently; and Paul with Christ immediately, *Phil. i. 23*.

44. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth, until the ninth hour. 45. And the sun was darkened, and the vail of the temple was rent in the mids. 46. ¶ And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. 47. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. 48. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. 49. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off beholding these things.

In these verses we have three things:

First, Christ's dying magnified by the prodigies that attended it: only two are here mentioned, which we had an account before.

1. The darkning of the sun at noon day: it was now about the sixth hour, that is, according to our computation, twelve a clock at noon; and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour; the sun was eclipsed, and the air exceedingly clouded at the same time, both which concurred to this thick darkness, which continued three hours, not three days, as that of Egypt did.

2. The rending of the vail of the temple. The former prodigy was in the heavens; this in the temple, for both these are the houses of God, and could not but feel it when the Son of God was thus abused, and thus signify their resentment of it. By this rending of the vail, was signified the taking away of the ceremonial law, which was a wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, and of all other difficulties and discouragements in our approach to God, so that now we may come boldly to the throne of grace.

Secondly, Christ's dying explained, (ver. 46.) by the words with which he breathed out his soul. Jesus had cried with a loud voice, when he said, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* So we are told in Matthew and Mark, and, it should seem, it was with a loud voice that he said this too, to shew his earnestness, and that all the people might take notice of it: and this he said, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*.

1. He borrowed these words from his father David, *Psal. xxxi. 5*. not that he needed to have words put into his mouth, but he chose to make use of David's words, to shew that it was the Spirit of Christ that testified in the Old Testament prophets, and that he came to fulfil the scripture. Christ died with scriptures in his mouth. Thus he directs us to make use of scripture-language in our addresses to God.

2. In this address to God he calls him *Father*, when he complained of being forsaken, he cried, *Eli, Eli, My God my God*; but to shew that that dreadful agony of his soul was now over, he here calls God *Father*. When he was giving up his life and soul for us, he did for us call God *Father*, that we through him might receive the adoption of sons.

3. Christ made use of these words in a sense peculiar to himself as Mediator. He was now to make his soul an offering for our sin, *Isa. liii. 10*. To give his life a ransom for many, *Matt. xx. 28*. By the eternal Spirit to offer himself, *Heb. ix. 14*. He was himself both the priest and the sacrifice; our souls were forfeited, and his must go to redeem the forfeiture. The price must be paid into the hands of God, the party offended by sin, to him he had undertaken to make full satisfaction. Now by these words he offered up the sacrifice, did, as it were, lay his hand upon the head of it, and surrender it, *τιθημι*, I deposit it, I pay it down into thy hands: Father, accept of my life and soul, instead of the lives and souls of the sinners I die for. The *animus offerentis*, the good will of the offerer, was requisite to the acceptance of the offering: Now Christ here expresseth his cheerful willingness to offer himself, as he had done when it was first proposed to him, *Heb. x. 9, 10*. *Lo, I come to do thy will, by the which will we are sanctified*.

4. Christ hereby signifies his dependence upon his Father for his resurrection, by the re-union of his soul and body. He commends his spirit into his Father's hand, to be received into paradise, and returned the third day. By this it appears that our Lord Jesus, as he had a true body, so he had a reasonable soul, which existed in a state of separation from the body, and thus he was made like unto his brethren; this soul he lodged in his Father's hand, committed it to his custody, resting in hope that it should not be left in *hades*, in its state of separation from the body, no, not so long as that the body might see corruption.

5. Christ has hereby left us an example; has fitted those words of David to the purpose of dying saints, and hath, as it were, sanctified them for their use. In death our great care should be about our souls, and we cannot more effectually provide for their welfare than by committing them now into the hands of God, as a father, to be sanctified and governed by his Spirit and grace, and at death by committing them into his hands to be made perfect in holiness and happiness. We must shew that we are freely willing to die, that we firmly believe another life after this, and are desirous of it, by saying, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*.

Thirdly, Christ's dying improved, by the impressions it made upon those that attended him.

1. The centurion, that had command of the guard, was much affected with what he saw, ver. 47. He was a Roman, a Gentile, a stranger to the consolations of Israel, and yet he glorified God. He never saw such amazing instances of divine power, and therefore took occasion from thence to adore God as the Almighty. And he bore a testimony to the patient sufferer. *Certainly this was a righteous man*, and was unjustly put to death. God's manifesting his power so much to do him honour, was a plain evidence of his innocence. His testimony in Matthew and Mark goes further: *Truly this was the Son of God*; but in his case this amounts to the same; for if he was a righteous man, he said very truly when he said *he was the Son of God*; and therefore that testimony



mony of his concerning himself must be admitted, for if it were false, he was not a *righteous man*.

2. The disinterested spectators could not but be concerned. This is taken notice of only here, *ver. 48. All the people that came together to that sight*, as is usual upon such occasions, *beholding the things which were done*, could not but go away very serious for the time, whatever they were when they came home, *They smote their breasts and returned.* (1.) They laid the thing very much to heart for the present: They looked upon it as a wicked thing to put him to death, and could not but think that some judgment of God would come upon their nation for it. Probably, those very people were of those that had cried, *Crucify him, crucify him*, and when he was nailed to the cross, reviled and blasphemed him; but now were so terrified with the darkness and earthquake, and the uncommon manner of his expiring, that they had not only their mouths stopped, but their consciences startled, and, in remorse for what they had done, as the publican, they *smote upon their breasts*, beat upon their own hearts, as those that had indignation at themselves. And some think this was a happy step towards that good work, which was afterwards wrought upon them, when they were pricked to the heart, *Acts ii. 37.* (2.) Yet it should seem the impression soon wore off; they *smote their breasts and returned.* They did not show any further token of respect to Christ, nor enquire more concerning him, but went home, and we have reason to fear in a little time they quite forgot it. Thus many that see Christ evidently set forth, crucified among them in the word and sacraments, are a little affected for the present, but it doth not continue; they *smite their breasts and return.* They see Christ's face in the glass of the ordinances, and admire him, but they *go away, and straightway forget what manner of man he is*, and what reason they have to love him.

3. His own friends and followers were forced to keep their distance, and yet got as near as they could, and durst, to see what was done, *ver. 49. All his acquaintance that knew him*, and were known of him, *stood afar off*, for fear, lest if they had been near him they should have been taken up as favourites of him; this was part of his sufferings, as of Job's, *chap. xix. 13. He has put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me*, *Psal. lxxxviii. 18. And the women that followed him together from Galilee, were beholding these things*, not knowing what to make of them, nor so ready as they should have been to take them for certain preludiums of his resurrection. Now was Christ set for a sign that should be spoken against, as Simeon foretold, *that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed*, *Luke ii. 34, 35.*

50. ¶ And behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor, and he was a good man, and a just: 51. (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews (who also himself waited for the kingdom of God) 52. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. 53. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. 54. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. 55. And the women also which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. 56. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath-day, according to the commandment.

We have here an account of Christ's burial: For he must be brought not only to death, but to the dust of death, *Psal. xxii. 15. according to the sentence, Gen. iii. 19. To the dust thou shalt return*: Observe,

1. Who buried him: His acquaintance *stood afar off*; they had neither money to bear the charge, nor courage to bear the odium of burying him decently; but God raised up one that had both; a man named Joseph, *ver. 50.* His character is, that he was a good man, and a just, a man of unspotted reputation for virtue and piety; was not only just to all, but good to all that needed him; and care to bury the dead, as becomes the hope of the resurrection of the dead, is one instance of goodness and beneficence: He was a person of quality, a counsellor, a senator, a member of the Sanhedrin, one of the elders of the Jewish church: Having said this of him, it was necessary to add, that though he was of that body of men who had put Christ to death, yet he *had not consented to their counsel and deed*, *ver. 51.* though it was carried by the majority, yet he entered his protest against it, and followed not the multitude, to do evil. Note, That evil counsel and deed shall not be reckoned our act, which we have not consented to: Nay, he not only dissented openly from those that were enemies to Christ, but he consented secretly with those that were his friends: He *himself waited for the kingdom of God*; he believed the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah and his kingdom, and expected the accomplishment of them. This was the man that appears upon this occasion to have a true

respect for the Lord Jesus. Note, There are many who are hearty in Christ's interests, who, though they do not make any shew in their outward profession of it, yet will be more ready to do him a piece of real service when there is occasion, than others that make a greater figure and noise.

2. What he did towards the burying of him, (1.) He went to Pilate, the judge that condemned him, and begged the body of Jesus, for it was at his dispose; and though he might have raised a party sufficient to have carried off the body by violence, yet he would take the regular course, and do it peaceably. (2.) He took it down, it should seem, with his own hands, and wrapped it in linen. They tell us it was the manner of the Jews (and that the word here used signifies so much) to roll the bodies of the dead, as we do little children, in their swaddling-clothes; so that the piece of fine linen which he bought whole, he cut into many pieces for that purpose. It is said of Lazarus, he was bound hand and foot, *John xi. 44. Grave clothes*, are to the saints as swaddling-clothes, which they shall out grow and put off, when they come to the perfect man.

3. Where he was buried; in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, that the prison of the grave might be made strong, as the church when she was brought into darkness, had her way enclosed with hewn stone, *Lam. iii. 2, 9.* But it was a sepulchre in which never man before was laid, for he was buried on such an account as never any one before him was buried, only in order to his rising again the third day, by his own power; and he was to triumph over the grave, so as never any man did.

4. When he was buried, *ver. 54. On the day of the preparation, when the sabbath drew on.* This is given as a reason why they made such haste with the funeral, because the sabbath drew on, which required their attendance to other work, preparing for the sabbath, and going forth to welcome it. Note, Weeping must not hinder sowing. Though they were in tears for the death of Christ, yet they must apply themselves to the sanctifying of the sabbath. And when the sabbath draws on, there must be preparation: Our worldly affairs must be so ordered, as that they may not hinder us from our sabbath work; and our holy affections must be so excited, as that they may carry us on in it.

5. Who attended the funeral, *ver. 55.* not any of the disciples, but only the women that came with him from Galilee, *ver. 55.* who, as they staid by him while he hung on the cross, so they followed him, all in tears, do doubt, and beheld the sepulchre where it was, what was the way to it, and how his body was laid in it. They were led to this, not by their curiosity, but by their affection to the Lord Jesus, which was strong as death, cruel as the grave, and which many waters could not quench. Here was a silent funeral, and not a solemn one, and yet his rest was glorious.

6. What preparation was made for the embalming of his body after he was buried, *ver. 56. They returned and prepared spices and ointments*, which was more an evidence of their love than of their faith; for had they remembered and believed what he had so often told them, that he should rise again the third day, they would have spared their cost and pains herein, as knowing that in a short time there would be a greater honour put upon his body, by the glory of his resurrection, than they could put upon it with their most precious ointments; but as busy as they were in this preparation, they rested on the sabbath-day, and did none of this servile work thereon, not according to the custom of their nation, but according to the commandments of their God, which, though the day be altered, is still in full force; Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy.

## C H A P. XXIV.

Our Lord Jesus went gloriously down to death, in spite of the malice of his enemies, who did all they could to make his death ignominious; but he rose again more gloriously; of which we have an account in this chapter: And the proofs and evidences of Christ's resurrection are more fully related by this evangelist, than they were by Matthew and Mark. Here is, (1.) Assurances given by two angels, to the women who visited the sepulchre, that the Lord Jesus was risen from the dead; according to his own word, which the angels refer them to, *ver. 1—7.* and the report of this to the apostles, *ver. 8—11.* (2.) The visit which Peter made to the sepulchre, and his discoveries there, *ver. 12.* (3.) Christ's conference with the two disciples that were going to Emmaus, and his making of himself known to them, *ver. 13—35.* (4.) His appearing to the eleven disciples themselves, the same day at evening, *ver. 36—48.* (5.) The farewell he gave them, and his ascension into heaven, and the joy and praise of his disciples whom he left behind, *ver. 49—53.*

1. NOW upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared,



and certain *others* with them. 2. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. 3. And they entred in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. 4. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. 5. And as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? 6. He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, 7. Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. 8. And they remembred his words, 9. And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. 10. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary *the mother* of James, and other *women that were with them*, which told these things unto the apostles. 11. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. 12. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre, and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondring in himself at that which was come to pass.

The manner of the re-uniting of Christ's soul and body in his resurrection, is a mystery, one of the *secret things* that *belong not to us*; but the *infallible proofs* of his resurrection, that he did indeed rise from the dead, and was thereby proved to be the Son of God, are *things revealed, which belong to us and to our children*, and some of them we have here in these verses; which relate the same story for substance that we had in Matthew and Mark.

1. We have here the affection and respect which the good women that had followed Christ shewed to him, after he was dead and buried, *ver. 1.* As soon as ever they could, after the sabbath was over, they *came to the sepulchre* to embalm his body, not to take it out of the linen in which Joseph had wrapped it, but to anoint the head and face, and perhaps the wounded hands and feet, and to scatter sweet spices upon and about the body; as it is usual with us to strew flowers about the dead bodies and graves of our friends, only to shew our good-will towards the taking off the deformity of death, if we could, and to make them somewhat the less loathsome to those that are about them. The zeal of those good women for Christ did continue; the spices which they had prepared the evening before the sabbath, at a great expence, they did not upon the second thoughts, when they had slept upon it, dispose of otherwise, suggesting, *to what purpose is this waste?* But they brought them to the sepulchre on the morning after the sabbath, early, very early. It is a rule of charity, *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give*, 2 Cor. ix. 7. What is prepared for Christ, let it be used for him. Notice is taken of the names of these women, Mary Magdalen and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, grave, matronly women, it should seem, they were: Notice is also taken of certain others with them, *ver. 1.* and again, *ver. 10.* These that had not joined in preparing the spices, yet would go along with them to the sepulchre; as if the number of Christ's friends increased when he was dead, *John xii. 24, 32.* The daughters of Jerusalem, when they saw how inquisitive the spouse was after her beloved, were desirous to seek him with her, *Cant. vi. 1.* so were these *other women*. The zeal of some provokes others.

2. The surprize they were in when they found the stone rolled away, and the grave empty, *ver. 2, 3.* they were *much perplexed* at that (*ver. 4.*) which they had much reason to rejoice in, that *the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre*, by which it appeared that he had a legal discharge, and leave to come out; and that they *found not the body of the Lord Jesus*, by which it appeared he made use of his discharge, and was come out. Note, Good Christians often perplex themselves about that, with which they should comfort and encourage themselves.

3. The plain account which they had of Christ's resurrection from two angels, that appeared to them *in shining garments*, not only white, but bright, and casting a lustre about them; they first saw *one* angel without the sepulchre, who presently went in and sat with another angel in the sepulchre, *one at the head, and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain*; so the evangelists may be reconciled.

The women, when they saw the angels, *were afraid*, lest they had some ill news for them; but instead of enquiring of them, *bowed down their faces to the earth*, to look for their dear Master in the grave: They would rather find him in his *grave-clothes*, than angels themselves in their *shining garments*: A dying Jesus has more beauty in the eyes of a believer, than angels themselves. These women, like the spouse, when found by the watchman (and angels are called watchers) enter not into any other conversation with them, but *saw ye him whom my soul loveth?* Now here,

(1.) They upbraid the women with the absurdity of the search they were making, *ver. 5.* *Why seek ye the living among the*

*dead?* Witness is hereby given to Christ, that he is *living*, of him *it is witnessed that he liveth*, Heb. vii. 8. and it is the comfort of all the saints, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*; for because he lives, we shall live also. But a reproof is given to those that look for him *among the dead*; among the dead heroes that the Gentiles worshipped, as if he were but like one of them, that look for him in an image, or a crucifix, the work of mens hands, or among unwritten traditions, and the inventions of men. And indeed all they that expect happiness and satisfaction in the creature, or perfection in this imperfect state, may be said to *seek the living among the dead*.

(2.) They assure them that he is risen from the dead, *ver. 6.* *He is not here, but is risen*; is risen by his own power: He has quitted his grave, to return no more to it. These angels were competent witnesses, for they had been sent express from heaven with orders for his discharge. And we are sure that their record is true; they durst not tell a lye.

(3.) They refer them to his own words, *Remember what he spoke to you, when he was yet in Galilee*. If they had duly believed and observed the prediction of it, they would easily have believed the thing itself when it came to pass; and therefore that the tidings might not be such a surprize to them as it seemed to be, he repeats to them what Christ had often said, in their hearing, The Son of Man must be *delivered into the hands of sinful men*; and though it was done by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, yet they that did it were not the less *sinful* for doing it; he told them that he *must be crucified*, surely they could not forget that, which they had with so much concern seen fulfilled; and would not that bring to their mind, that which always followed, *the third day he shall rise again?* Observe, These angels from heaven bring not any *new gospel*, but put them in mind, as the angels of the churches do, of the sayings of Christ, and teach them how to improve and apply them.

4. Their satisfaction in this account, *ver. 8.* the women seemed to acquiesce; they *remembered his words* when they were thus put in mind of them, and concluded from thence, if he were risen it was no more than they had reason to expect; and now were ashamed of the preparations they had made to embalm him on the third day, who had often said he would on the third day rise again. Note, A seasonable remembrance of the words of Christ will help us to a right understanding of his providence.

5. The report they brought of this to the apostles. *They returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest* of Christ's disciples, *ver. 9.* It doth not appear that they were together in a body, they were *scattered every one to his own*, perhaps scarce two or three of them together in the same lodgings, but one went to some of them, and another to others of them, so that in a little time, that morning, they got them all notice of it. But we are told, *ver. 11.* how the report was received, *their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not*. They thought it was only the fancy of the women, and imputed it to the power of imagination, for they also had forgotten Christ's words, and wanted to be put in mind of them, not only what he had said to them in Galilee some time ago, but what he had said very lately in the night wherein he was betrayed, *Again a little while and ye shall see me. I will see you again*. One would be amazed at the stupidity of these disciples, who had themselves so often professed, that they believed Christ to be the Son of God and the true Messiah, had been so often told he must die and rise again, and then enter into his glory, had seen him more than once raise the dead, that they should be so backward to believe his raising himself; surely it would seem the less strange to them, when hereafter this complaint would justly be taken up *by them*, to remember, that when time was it might justly have been taken up against them, *Who hath believed our report?*

6. The enquiry which Peter made hereupon, *ver. 12.* It was Mary Magdalen that brought the report to him, as appears *John xx. 1, 2.* where this story of his running to the sepulchre is more particularly related. (1.) Peter hastened to the sepulchre, upon the report; perhaps ashamed of himself to think Mary Magdalen should have been there before him; and yet, perhaps, he had not been so ready to go thither now, if the women had not told him, among other things, that *the watch was fled*. Many that are *swift footed* enough when there is no danger, are but *cow-hearted* when there is. Peter now *ran to the sepulchre*, who but the other day *run from his Master*. (2.) He looked into the sepulchre and took notice how orderly the linen clothes in which Christ was wrapped, were taken off and folded up, and laid by themselves, but the body gone. He was very particular in making his observations, as if he would rather credit his own eyes than the testimony of the angels. (3.) He went away, as he thought, not much the wiser, *wondering in himself at that which was come to pass*. Had he remembered the words of Christ, even this was enough to satisfy him that he was risen from the dead, but having forgotten them, he is only amazed with the thing, and knows not what to make of it. There is many a thing puzzling and perplexing to us, which would be both plain and profitable if we did but rightly understand the words of Christ, and had them ready to us.



13. ¶ And behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. 14. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15. And it came to pass, that while they communed together, and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. 16. But their eyes were holden, that they should not know him. 17. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? 18. And the one of them, whose name was Cleophas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? 19. And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God, and all the people: 20. And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. 21. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. 22. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: 23. And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. 24. And certain of them which were with us, went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said; but him they saw not. 25. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets hath spoken! 26. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? 27. And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself. 28. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. 29. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. 30. And it came to pass as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. 31. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. 32. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? 33. And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, 34. Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. 35. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

This appearance of Christ to the two disciples, going to Emmaus, was mentioned, and but just mentioned before, *Mark* xvi. 12. here it is largely related; it happened the same day, that Christ rose, the first day of the new world, that rose with him. One of these two disciples was Cleophas, or Alpheus, said by the ancients to be the brother of Joseph, Christ's supposed father; who the other was, is not certain. Some think it was Peter; it should seem indeed that Christ did appear particularly to Peter that day, which the eleven spoke of among themselves, *ver.* 34. and Paul mentions, *1 Cor.* xv. 5. But it could not be Peter that was one of the two, for he was one of the eleven to whom the two returned; and besides, we know Peter so well, as to think, that if he had been one of the two he would have been the chief speaker, and not Cleophas. It was one of those that were associate with the eleven, mentioned, *ver.* 9.

Now in this passage of story, we may observe,

1. The walk and talk of these two disciples. *They went to a village called Emmaus*, which is reckoned to be about two hours walk from Jerusalem; it is here said to be about sixty furlongs, seven measured miles, *ver.* 13. Whether they went thither upon business or to see some friend, doth not appear: I suspect they were going homewards to Galilee, with an intention not to enquire more after this Jesus; that they were meditating a retreat, and stole away from their company, without asking leave, or taking leave; for the accounts brought them that morning of their Master's resurrection, seemed to them as idle tales; and if so, no wonder they began to think of making the best of their way home.

But as they travelled they talked together of all these things, which had happened, *ver.* 14. They had not courage to confer

of these things, and consult what was to be done in the present juncture at Jerusalem, for fear of the Jews, but when they were got out of the hearing of the Jews, they could talk it over with more freedom. *They talked over these things*, reasoning with themselves concerning the probabilities of Christ's resurrection, for according as these appeared, they would either go forward, or return back to Jerusalem. Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ when they are together, to talk of his death and resurrection; thus they may improve one another's knowledge, refresh one another's memory, and stir up another's devout affections.

2. The good company they met with upon the road, when Jesus himself came and joined himself to them, *ver.* 15. *They communed together and reasoned*, and perhaps were warm at the argument, one hoping that their Master was risen, and would set up his kingdom, the other despairing; *Jesus himself drew near*, as a stranger that seeing them travel the same way that he went, told them he should be glad of their company.

We may observe it for our encouragement to keep up Christian conference, and edifying discourse among us, that where but two together are well employed in work of that kind, Christ will come to them and make a third. When they that fear the Lord, *speake one to another*, the Lord *hearkens and hears*, and is with them of a truth; so that two thus twined in faith and love become a *three-fold cord, not easily broken*, *Eccl.* iv. 12. They in their communings and reasonings together were searching for Christ, comparing notes concerning him, that they might come to more knowledge of him, and now Christ comes to them. Note, They who seek Christ shall find him: he will manifest himself to those that enquire after him; and give knowledge to those who use the helps for knowledge, which they have. When the spouse enquired of the watchman concerning her beloved, *it was but a little that she passed from them*, but she found him, *Cant.* iii. 4.

But though they had Christ with them, they were not at first aware of it, *ver.* 16. *Their eyes were held that they should not know him*; it should seem, there was both an alteration of the object, for it is said in *Mark*, that now he appeared in another form; and a restraint upon the organ, for here it is said, that *their eyes were held* by a divine power; or, as some think, there was a confusion in the medium; the air was so disposed that they could not discern who it was. No matter how it was, but so it was, they did not know him; Christ so ordering it that they might the more freely discourse with him, and he with them; and that it might appear, that his word, and the influence of it, did not depend upon his bodily presence, which the disciples had too much doted upon, and must be weaned from; but he could teach them and warm their hearts by others, who should have his spiritual presence with them; and should have his grace going along with them unseen.

3. The conference that was between Christ and them, when he knew them and they knew not him. Now Christ and his disciples, as is usual when friends meet incognito, or in a disguise, are here crossing questions.

1. Christ's first question to them is, concerning *their present sadness*, which plainly appeared in their countenances, *ver.* 17. *What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad?* It is a very kind and friendly enquiry. Observe,

(1.) They were sad, it appeared to a stranger that they were so. (1.) They had lost their dear Master, and were in their own apprehensions quite disappointed in their expectations from him. They had given up the cause, and knew not what course to take to retrieve it. Note, Christ's disciples have reason to be sad when he withdraws from them; to fast when the bridegroom is taken from them. (2.) Though he was risen from the dead, yet either they did not know it, or did not believe it, and so they were still in sorrow: Note Christ's disciples are often sad and sorrowful, even then when they have reason to rejoice, but through the weakness of their faith, they cannot take the comfort that is offered to them. (3.) Being sad, they had *communications one with another* concerning Christ. Note, 1. It becomes Christians to talk of Christ. Were our hearts as full of him, and of what he has done and suffered for us, as they should be, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth would speak, not only of God and his providence, but of Christ, and his grace and love.

2. Good company and good converse is an excellent antidote against prevailing melancholy. When Christ's disciples were sad, they did not each one get by himself, but continued as he sent them out, two and two, for two is better than one, especially in times of sorrow. Giving vent to the grief, may perhaps give ease to the grieved; and by talking it over, we may talk ourselves, or our friends may talk us into a better frame. Joint-mourners should be mutual comforters; comforts sometimes come best from such.

(2.) Christ came up to them and enquired into the matter of their talk, and the cause of their grief, *What manner of communications are these?* Though Christ was now entered into his state of exaltation, yet he continued tender of his disciples, and concerned for their comfort. He speaks as one troubled to see their melancholy; *Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?* *Gen.* xl. 7. Note, Our



Our Lord Jesus takes notice of the sorrow and sadness of his disciples, and is afflicted in their afflictions. Christ has hereby taught us, (1.) To be *conversable*: Christ here fell into discourse with two grave, serious persons, though he was a stranger to them, and they knew him not, and they readily embraced it. It doth not become Christians to be morose and shy, but to take pleasure in good society. (2.) We are hereby taught to be *compassionate*. When we see our friends in sorrow and sadness, we should like Christ here, take cognizance of their grief, and give them the best counsel and comfort we can, *Weep with them that weep*.

2. In answer to this, they put a question to him concerning his *strangeness*, ver. 18. *Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that are come to pass there in these days?* Observe,

(1.) Cleophas gave him a civil answer; he doth not rudely ask him, what is that to you, what we are talking of, and bid him go about his business. Note, We ought to be civil to those who are civil to us, and to carry ourselves obligingly to all, both in word and deed. It was a dangerous time now with Christ's disciples, yet he was not jealous of this stranger, that he had any design upon them, to inform against them, or bring them into trouble. Charity is not forward to *think evil*, no not of strangers.

(2.) He is full of Christ himself, and of his death and sufferings, and wonders that every body else is not so too. What, art thou such a stranger in Jerusalem as not to know what has been done to our Master there? Note, Those are strangers indeed in Jerusalem that know not of the death and sufferings of Christ. What, are they *daughters of Jerusalem*, and yet so little acquainted with Christ, as to ask *what is thy beloved more than another beloved?*

(3.) He is very willing to inform this stranger concerning Christ, and to draw on further discourse with him upon this subject. He would not have any one that had the face of a man to be ignorant of Christ. Note, Those who have themselves the knowledge of Christ crucified should do what they can to spread that knowledge, and lead others into an acquaintance with him. And it is observable, these disciples that were so forward to instruct the strangers were instructed by him; for to him that has, and uses what he has, shall be given.

(4.) It appears by what Cleophas saith, that the death of Christ made a mighty noise in Jerusalem, so that it could not be imagined any man should be such a stranger in the city, as not to know of it; it was all the talk of the town, and discoursed of in all companies. Thus the matter of fact came to be universally *known*, which after the pouring out of the Spirit was to be *explained*.

3. Christ by way of reply, asks concerning *their knowledge*, ver. 19. *He said unto them, what things?* thus making himself yet more a stranger. Observe,

(1.) Jesus Christ made light of his own sufferings in comparison with the joy set before him, which was the recompence of it. Now he was entering upon his glory, see with what unconcernedness he looks back upon his sufferings; *What things?* he had reason to know what things; for to him they were bitter things, and heavy things, and yet he asks *what things?* The sorrow was forgotten for joy that the man-child of our salvation was born. He took pleasure in infirmities for our sakes, to teach us to do so for his sake.

(2.) Those whom Christ will teach, he will first examine how far they have learned; they must tell him *what things* they know, and then he will tell them, what was the meaning of these things, and lead them into the mystery of them.

4. They hereupon give him a particular account, concerning Christ, and the present posture of his affairs. Observe the story they tell, ver. 19, &c.

(1.) Here is a summary of Christ's *life and character*. The things they are full of, are concerning *Jesus of Nazareth*, so he was commonly called, *who was a prophet*, a teacher come from God; he preached a true and excellent doctrine, which had manifestly its rise from heaven, and its tendency towards heaven; he confirmed it by many glorious miracles, miracles of mercy, so that he was *mighty in deed and word before God and all the people*, i. e. He was both a mighty favourite of heaven, and a mighty blessing to this earth. He was, and appeared to be, greatly beloved of God, and much the darling of his people. He had great acceptance with God, and a great reputation in the country. Many are *great before all the people*, and are caressed by them, who are not so *before God*, as the scribes and Pharisees, but Christ was mighty both in his *doctrine*, and in his *doings, before God and all the people*. Those were strangers in Jerusalem, that did not know this.

(2.) Here is a modest narrative of his sufferings and death, ver. 20. Though he was so dear both to God and man, yet the *chief priests and our rulers*, in contempt of both, *delivered him* to the Roman power, *to be condemned to death*, and they have crucified him. It is strange they did not aggravate the matter more, and lay more load upon those that had been guilty of crucifying Christ, but perhaps, because they spoke to one that was a stranger, they thought it prudence to avoid all reflexions upon the chief priests and their rulers, how just soever.

(3.) Here is an intimation of their disappointment in him, as the reason of their sadness; *we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel*, ver. 4. We are of those, who not only looked upon him to be a prophet, like Moses, but like him a redeemer too; he was depended upon, and great things expected from him by them that *looked for redemption*, and in it for the consolation of Israel. Now, if *hope deferred maketh the heart sick*, hope disappointed, especially such a hope, kills the heart dead. But see how they made that the ground of their despair, which if they had understood it aright, was the surest ground of their hope, and that was the dying of the Lord Jesus: *We trusted* (say they) *that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel*. And is it not he that doth redeem Israel? Nay, is he not by his death paying the price of their redemption, was it not necessary in order to his saving Israel from their sins, that he should suffer? So that now that most difficult part of his undertaking was got over, they had more reason than ever to *trust*, that *this is he that shall deliver Israel*; yet now they are ready to give up the cause.

(4.) Here is an account of their present amazement with reference to his resurrection. (1.) *This is the third day* since he was crucified and died, and that was the day, when it was expected if ever, that he should rise again, and rise in glory and outward pomp, and shew himself as publicly in honour as he had been shewn three days before in disgrace; but we see no sign of it; nothing appears as we expected to the conviction and confusion of his prosecutors, and the consolation of his disciples, but all is silent. (2.) They own, that there was a report among them that he was risen, but they seem to speak of it very slightly, and as what they gave no credit at all to, ver. 22, 23. *Certain women also of our company made us astonished*, and that was all, which were *early at the sepulchre*, and found the body gone, and they said they had *seen a vision of angels*, which said he was alive, but we are ready to think it was only their fancy, and no real thing, for angels would have been sent to the apostles, not to the women, and women are easily imposed upon. (3.) They acknowledge that some of the apostles had made a visit to the sepulchre and found it *empty*, ver. 24. but *him they saw not*, and therefore we have reason to fear that he *is not risen*, for if he were, surely he would have *shewed himself* to them. So that upon the whole matter, we have no great reason to think that he is risen, and therefore have no expectations from him now; our hopes were all nailed to his cross, and buried in his grave.

(5.) Our Lord Jesus, though not known by face to them, makes himself known to them by his word.

(1.) He reproves them for their incogitancy, and the weakness of their faith in the scriptures of the Old Testament, ver. 25. *O fools, and slow of heart to believe*: When Christ forbade us to say to our brother *thou fool*, it was intended to restrain us from giving unreasonable reproaches, not from giving just reproofs. Christ called them *fools*, not as it signifies *wicked men*, in which sense he forbade it us, but as it signifies *weak men*. He might call them *fools* for he *knows our foolishness*, the foolishness that is bound in our hearts. They are fools that act against their own interest, so they did, who would not admit the evidence given them that their Master was risen, but put away the comfort of it. That which is condemned in them as their *foolishness* is, (1.) Their *slowness to believe*. Believers are branded as fools by atheists and infidels and free-thinkers, and their most holy faith censured as a fond credulity; but Christ tells us, that those are *fools* who are *slow of heart to believe*, and are kept from it by prejudices never impartially examined. (2.) Their *slowness to believe the writings of the prophets*. He doth not so much blame them for their slowness to believe the testimony of the women, and of the angels, but for that which was the cause thereof, their *slowness to believe the prophets*; for if they had given the prophets of the Old Testament their due weight and consideration, they would have been as sure of Christ's *rising from the dead* that morning, being the third day after his death, as they were of the *rising of the sun*; for the *series and succession* of events as it is settled by *prophecy*, is no less certain and inviolable than as it is settled by *providence*; were we but more *conversant* with the scripture and the divine counsels as far as they are made known in the scripture, we should not be subject to such perplexities as we oft *intangle ourselves in*.

(2.) He shews them that the sufferings of Christ, which were such a stumbling-block to them, and made them unapt to believe his glory, were really the appointed way to his glory, and he could not go to it any other way, ver. 26. *Ought not the Christ*, (the Messiah) *to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* Was it not decreed, and was not that decree declared, that the promised Messiah must first suffer and then reign? that he must go by his cross to his crown? Had they never read the fifty-third of Isaiah, and the ninth of Daniel, where the prophets speak so very plainly of the *sufferings of Christ* and the *glory that should follow*, 1 Pet. i. 11. The cross of Christ was it, that they could not reconcile themselves to; now here he shews them two things, which take off the offence of the cross; (1.) That the Messiah *ought to suffer* these things; and therefore his sufferings were not only no objection against his being the Messiah, but really



really a proof of it, as the afflictions of the saints are an evidence of their sonship; and they were so far from ruining their expectations, that really they were the foundation of their hopes. He could not have been a *saviour*, if he had not been a *sufferer*. Christ's undertaking our salvation was voluntary, but having undertaken it, it was necessary he should suffer and die. (2.) That when he had suffered these things, he should *enter into his glory*; which he did at his resurrection, that was his first step upwards. Observe, It is called *his glory*; because he was *duly intitled* to it; and it was the glory he had before the world was; he *ought* to enter into it, for in that as well as in his sufferings, the scripture must be fulfilled. He *ought* to suffer first, and then to enter into his glory; and thus the *reproach* of the cross is for ever *rolled away*; and we are directed to expect the crown of *thorns*, and then that of *glory*.

(3.) He expounded to them the scriptures of the Old Testament, which spake of the Messiah, and shewed them how they were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; and now can tell them more concerning him, than they could before tell him, *ver. 27. beginning at Moses*, the first inspired writer of the Old Testament, he went in order through *all the prophets*, and *expounded to them the things concerning himself*, shewing that the sufferings he had now gone through, were so far from defeating the prophecies of the scripture concerning him, that they were the accomplishment of them. He begun at Moses, who recorded the first promise, in which it was plainly foretold, that the Messiah should have his *heel bruised*, but that by it the serpent's head should be incurably broken. Note, 1. There are things dispersed throughout *all the scriptures* concerning Christ, which it is of great advantage to have *collected* and *put together*. You cannot go far in any part of scripture, but you meet with something has reference to Christ, some prophecy, some promise, some prayer, some type or other; for he is the true *treasure hid in the field* of the Old Testament. A golden throne of gospel grace runs through the whole web of the Old Testament. There is an *eye* of that *white* to be discerned in every place. 2. The things concerning Christ need to be *expounded*. The eunuch, though a scholar, would not pretend to understand them, *except some man should guide him*, Acts viii. 31. for they were delivered darkly, according to that dispensation: but now the veil is taken away, the New Testament expounds the Old. (3.) Jesus Christ is himself the best expositor of scripture, particularly the scriptures concerning himself; and even after his resurrection, it was in this way that he led people into the knowledge of the mystery concerning himself; not by advancing new notions independent upon the scripture, but by shewing how the scripture was fulfilled, and turning them over to the study of them. Even the Apocalypse itself, is but a second part of the Old Testament prophecies, and has continually an eye to them. *If men believe not Moses and the prophets*, they are incurable. (4.) In *studying* the scriptures it is good to be *methodical*, and to take them in order; for the Old Testament light shone *gradually* to the *perfect day*, and it is good to observe how, *at sundry times* and in *divers manners* (subsequent predictions improving and giving light to the preceding ones) God spake to the fathers concerning his Son, by whom he has now *spoken* to us. Some begin their Bible at the wrong end, that study the Revelations first, but Christ has here taught us to *begin at Moses*. Thus far the conference between them.

4. Here is the discovery which Christ at length made of himself to them. One would have given a great deal for a copy of the sermon Christ preached to them by the way, of that exposition of the Bible he gave them, but it is not thought fit we should have it, we have the substance of it in other scriptures; the disciples are so charmed with it, that they think they are come too soon to their journey's end: but so it is; *They drew nigh to the village whither they went*, *ver. 28.* where, it should seem, they determined to *take up*, for that night. And now,

1. They courted his stay with them. *He made as though he would have gone further*; he did not *say* he would, but he seemed to them to be going further, and did not readily turn in to their friend's house, which it would not be decent for a stranger to do, unless he were invited; he would have gone further, if they had not courted his stay; so that here was nothing like dissimulation in the case. If a stranger be *shy*, every one knows the meaning of it, he will not thrust himself *rudely* upon your house or company, but if you make it appear that you are *freely* desirous of him for your guest or companion, he knows not but he may accept your invitation; and this was all that Christ did, when he *made as though he would have gone further*. Note, Those that would have Christ dwell with them, must invite him, and be importunate with him; though he is often *found of those that seek him not*, yet those only that *seek* can be sure to *find*; and if he seem to *draw off* from us, it is but to draw out our importunity: as here; *they constrained him*; both of them laid hold on him, with a kind and friendly violence, saying, *abide with us*. Note, Those that have experienced the pleasure and profit of communion with Christ, cannot but covet more of his company, and beg of him, not only to *walk with them* all day, but to *abide with them* at night. When the day is far spent, and it is towards evening, we begin to think of retiring for our repose, and then it is proper to have our eye to Christ, and beg of him to *abide with us*; to manifest

himself to us, and to fill our minds with good thoughts of him, and good affections to him. Christ yielded to their importunity; *he went in to tarry with them*. Thus ready is Christ to give further instructions and comforts to those who improve what they have received. He has promised, that *if any man open the door*, to bid him welcome, he will *come in to him*, Rev. iii. 20.

2. He manifested himself to them, *ver. 30, 31.* We may suppose he continued his discourse with them, which he began upon the road, for thou must talk of the things of God, *when thou sittest in the house, as well as when thou walkest by the way*; while supper was a getting ready, which perhaps was soon done, the provision was so small and mean, it is likely, he entertained them with such communication as was *good*, and *to the use of edifying*; and so likewise as they *sat at meat*, his *lips fed* them. But still they little thought that it was Jesus himself, that was all this while talking with them: till at length he was pleased to throw off his disguise, and then to withdraw.

1. They began to suspect it was he, when, as they *sat down to meat*, he undertook the office of the master of the feast, which he performed so like himself, and like what he used to do among his disciples, that by it they discerned him. He *took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them*. This he did with his usual air both of authority and affection, with the same gestures and mien, with the same expressions, perhaps, in craving a blessing, and in giving the bread to them. This was not a *miraculous* meal, like that of the five loaves; nor a *sacramental* meal, like that of the eucharist, but a *common* meal, yet Christ here did the same as he did in those; to teach us to keep up our communion with God through Christ in common providences, as well as in special ordinances; and to crave a blessing and give thanks at every meal; and to see our daily bread provided for us, and broken to us by the hand of Jesus Christ, the master, not only of the great family, but of all our families. Wherever we *sit down to eat*, let us set Christ at the upper end of the table, take our meat as *blessed to us* by him, and *eat and drink* to his glory; and receive contentedly and thankfully what he is pleased to *carve* out to us, be the fare never so coarse and mean; we may well receive it cheerfully, if we can by faith see it coming to us *from Christ's* hand and with his blessing.

2. Presently *their eyes were opened*, and then they saw who it was, and *knew him* well enough; whatever it was which had hitherto concealed him from them, it was now taken out of the way, the mists were scattered, the veil taken off, and then they made no question but it was their master; he might, for wise and holy ends, put on the shape of another, but no other could put on his; and therefore it must be he. See how Christ, by his Spirit and grace, makes himself known to the souls of his people. (1.) He opens the scriptures to them, for they are they which testify of him, to those who *search them*, and search for him in them. (2.) He meets them at his table in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and commonly there makes further discoveries of himself to them; is *known to them in the breaking of bread*: but (3.) The work is completed by the opening of the eyes of their mind, and causing the scales to fall off from them, as from Paul's in his conversion. If he that gives the revelation, do not give the understanding, we are in the dark still.

3. He immediately disappeared; he *vanished out of their sight*. *Ἀπαρτίσας ἐξέβηκε*, he *withdrew himself* from them; slipped away of a sudden, and went *out of sight*. Or, he *became not visible by them*; was made inconspicuous from them. It should seem, that though Christ's body after his resurrection was the very *same body* in which he suffered and died, as appeared by the marks in it, yet it was so far changed, as to become either *visible* or *not visible*, as he thought fit to make it, which was a step towards his being made a *glorious body*. As soon as he had given his disciples one glimpse of him, he was gone presently; such short and transient views have we of Christ in this world, we see him, but, in a little while, lose the sight of him again, when we come to heaven, the vision of him will have no interruptions.

5. Here is the reflexion which these disciples made upon this conference, and the report they made of it to their brethren at Jerusalem.

1. The reflexion they each of them made upon the influence which Christ's discourse had upon them, *ver. 32.* *They said one to another, did not our hearts burn within us?* I am sure mine did, saith one, and so did mine, saith the other, I never was so affected with any discourse in all my life. Thus do they not so much *compare notes as compare hearts*, in review of the sermon Christ had preached to them. They found the preaching powerful, even when they knew not the preacher; it made things very plain and clear to them; and, which was more, brought a *divine heat*, with a *divine light*, into their souls, such as put their hearts into a glow, and kindled a holy fire of pious and devout affections in them. Now this they take notice of, for the confirming of their belief, that it was indeed, as at last they saw, *Jesus himself*, that had been talking with them all along, what fools were we that we were not sooner aware who it was? For none but he, no word but his, could *make our hearts burn within us* as they did, it must be he that has the key of the heart, it could be no other. See here (1.) What *preaching* is likely to *do good*; such as Christ's was; *plain teaching*, and which is familiar and level to our capacity, he *talked with us by the way*; and *scriptural* preaching; he



opened to us the scriptures, the scriptures relating to himself. Ministers should shew people their religion in their Bibles, and that they preach no other doctrine to them but what is there; must shew that they make that the fountain of their knowledge, and the foundation of their faith. Note, The expounding of those scriptures, which speak of Christ, has a direct tendency to warm the hearts of his disciples, both to quicken them, and to comfort them. (2.) What *bearing* is likely to *do good*, that which makes the *heart burn*, when we are much affected with the things of God, especially with the love of Christ in dying for us, and have our hearts thereby drawn out in love to him, and drawn up in holy desires and devotions, then our hearts *burn within us*, when our hearts are raised and elevated, and are as the sparks which *fly upward* towards God, and when they are kindled and carried out with a holy zeal and indignation against sin, both in others and in ourselves, and we are in some measure refined and purified from it by the *spirit of judgment*, and the *spirit of burning*, then we may say, through grace, our hearts are thus inflamed.

2. The report they brought of this to their brethren at Jerusalem, *ver. 33.* They rise up the same hour, so transported with joy at this discovery Christ had made of himself to them, that they could not stay to make an end of their supper, but returned with all speed to Jerusalem, though it was towards evening. If they had had any thoughts of quitting their relation to Christ, this soon banished all such thoughts out of their mind, and there needed no more to send them back to his flock. However, it should seem they intended at least to take up their quarters to night at Emmaus, but now they had seen Christ, they could not rest till they had brought the good news to the disciples, both for the confirmation of their trembling faith, and for the comfort of their sorrowful spirits, with the *same comforts wherewith they were comforted of God*. Note, It is the duty of those to whom Christ hath manifested himself, to let others know what he has done for their souls. When thou art converted, instructed, comforted, strengthen thy brethren. These disciples were full of this matter themselves, and must go to their brethren to give vent to their joys, as well as to give them satisfaction that their Master was risen. Observe,

1. How they found them, just when they came in among them, discoursing on the same subject, and relating another proof of the resurrection of Christ. They found the eleven, and those that were their usual companions, gathered together late in the night, to pray together, it may be, and to consider what was to be done, in this juncture; and they found them saying among themselves (*λέγοντας*, it is the saying of the eleven, not of the two, as is plain by the original) and when these two came in, they repeated to them, with joy and triumph, *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon*, *ver. 34.* That Peter had a sight of him before the rest of the disciples had, appears, *1 Cor. xv. 5.* where it is said, *He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve*; the angel having ordered the women to tell Peter of it particularly, *Mark xvi. 7.* for his comfort, it is highly probable that our Lord Jesus did himself presently the same day appear to Peter, though we have no particular narrative of it, to confirm the word of his messengers. This he had related to his brethren, but observe Peter doth not here proclaim it, and boast of it himself, he thought that did not become a penitent, but the other disciples speak of it with exultation, *The Lord is risen indeed, ὁντως*, really, it is now past dispute; no room is left to doubt it, for he has appeared not only to the women, but to Simon.

2. How they seconded their evidence with an account of what they had seen, *ver. 35.* They told what things were done in the way. The words that were spoken by Christ to them in the way, having a wonderful effect and influence upon them, are here called the things that were done in the way: for the words that Christ speaks are not an empty sound, but they are spirit, and they are life, and wondrous things are done by them, done by the way, by the by, as it were, where it is not expected. They told also how he was at length known to them in the breaking of bread; then when he was carving out blessings to them, God opened their eyes to discern who it was. Note, It would be of great use for the discovery and confirmation of truth, if the disciples of Christ would compare their observations and experiences, and communicate to each other what they know, and have felt in themselves.

36. ¶ And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. 37. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. 40. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. 41. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? 42. And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an hony-comb. 43. And he took it, and did eat before them. 44.

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me. 45. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48. And ye are witnesses of these things. 49. ¶ And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

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1. The great surprise, which his appearing gave them. He came in among them very seasonably, as they were comparing notes concerning the proofs of his resurrection. As they thus spake, and were ready perhaps to put it to the question, whether the proofs produced amounted to evidence sufficient of their Master's resurrection, or no, and how they should proceed; Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and put it out of question. Note, Those who make the best use they can of their evidences for their comfort, may expect further assurances; and that the Spirit of Christ will witness with their spirits (as Christ here witnessed with the disciples, and confirmed their testimony) that they are the children of God, and risen with Christ. Observe (1.) The comfort Christ spoke to them. *Peace be unto you.* This intimates in general, that it was a kind visit, which Christ now made them, a visit of love and friendship. Though they had very unkindly deserted him in his sufferings, yet he takes the first opportunity of seeing them together; for he deals not with us as we deserve. They did not credit those who had seen him, therefore he comes himself, that they might not continue in their disconsolate incredulity. He had promised, that after his resurrection he would see them in Galilee, but so desirous was he to see them and satisfy them, that he anticipated the appointment, and sees them at Jerusalem. Note, Christ is often better than his word, but never worse. Now his first word to them was, *Peace be to you*, not in a way of compliment but of consolation. This was a common form of salutation among the Jews, and Christ would thus express his usual familiarity with them, though he was now entered into his state of exaltation. Many, when they are advanced, forget their own old friends, and take state upon them, but we see Christ as free with them as ever. Thus Christ would at the first word intimate to them, that he did not come to quarrel with Peter for denying him, and the rest for out-running him, no, he came peaceably, to signify to them that he had forgiven them and was reconciled to them. (2.) The fright which they put themselves into upon it, *ver. 37.* They were terrified, supposing that they had seen a spirit, because he came in among them without any noise, and was in the midst of them ere they were aware. The word used, *Matth. xiv. 26.* when they said, it is a spirit, is *πνεῦμα*, it is a spectre, an apparition; but the word here used is *πρῆμα*, the word that properly signifies a spirit; they supposed it to be a spirit not clothed with a real body. Though we have an alliance and correspondence with the world of spirits, and are hastening to it, yet while we are here in this world of sense and matter, it is a terror to us to have a spirit so far change its own nature as to become visible to us, and conversable with us, for it is something, and bodes something very extraordinary.

2. The great satisfaction, which his discourse gave them; wherein we have,

First, The reproof he gave them for their causeless fears, *ver. 38.* Why are ye troubled, and why do frightful thoughts arise in your hearts? Observe here, (1.) That when at any time we are troubled, thoughts are apt to rise in our hearts, that do us hurt. Sometimes the trouble is the effect of the thoughts that arise in our hearts, our griefs and fears take rise from those things that are the creatures of our own fancy: sometimes the thoughts arising in the heart, are the effect of the trouble; without are fightings, and then within are fears. Those that are melancholy and troubled in mind, have thoughts arising in their hearts, which reflect dishonour upon God, and create disquiet to themselves. *I am cut off from thy sight. The Lord has forsaken and forgotten me.*

(2.) That many of the troublesome thoughts with which our minds are disquieted, arise from our mistakes concerning Christ; they here thought they had seen a spirit, when they saw Christ, and that put them into this fright; we forget that Christ is our elder brother, and look upon him to be at as great a distance from us as the world of spirits is from this world, and therewith terrify ourselves. When Christ is by his Spirit convincing and humbling us, when he is by his providence trying and converting us, we mistake him, as if he designed our hurt, and that troubles us.

(3.) That



(3.) That all the troublesome thoughts which rise in our hearts at any time, are known to the Lord Jesus, even at the first rise of them; and they are displeasing to him. He chid his disciples for such *thoughts*, to teach us to chide ourselves for them. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou troubled? why do thoughts arise*, that are neither true nor good, that have neither foundation, nor fruit, but hinder our joy in God, disfit us for our duty, give advantage to Satan, and deprive us of the comforts laid up for us?

Secondly, The proof he gave them of his resurrection, both for the *silencing* of their fears, by convincing them that he was not a spirit; and for the *strengthening* of their faith in that doctrine, which they were to preach to the world, by giving them a full satisfaction concerning his resurrection, which if not true, their faith and preaching was all vain. Two proofs he gives them.

1. He shews them his body, particularly, *his hands and his feet*. They saw that he had the shape and features and exact resemblance of their Master, but is it not his ghost? No, faith Christ, *Behold my hands and my feet*, you see I have hands and feet, and therefore have a true body; you see I can move these hands and feet, and therefore have a living body; and you see the marks of the nails in my hands and feet, and therefore it is my own body, the same that you saw crucified, and not a borrowed one. He lays down this principle, that a spirit has not flesh and bones, it is not compounded of gross matter, shaped into various members, and consisting of divers heterogeneous parts, as our bodies are; he doth not tell us what a spirit is, it is time enough to know that when we go to the world of spirits, but what it is not, *It has not flesh and bones*. Now hence he infers, *it is I my self*; whom you have been so intimately acquainted with, and have had such familiar conversation with; it is *I my self* whom you have reason to rejoice in and not to be afraid of. Those who know Christ aright, and know him as *theirs* will have no reason to be terrified at his appearances, at his approaches.

He appeals to their sight, shews them *his hands and his feet*, which were pierced with the nails; Christ retained the marks of them in his glorified body, that they might be proofs that it was he himself, and he was willing they should be seen; he afterwards shewed them to Thomas, for he is not ashamed of his sufferings for us; little reason then have we to be ashamed of them, or of ours, for him. As he shewed his wounds here to his disciples for the enforcing of his instructions to them, so he shewed them to his Father, for the enforcing of his intercessions with him. He appears in heaven as a lamb that had been slain, Rev. v. 6. his blood speaks, Heb. xii. 24. He makes intercession in the virtue of his satisfaction; he saith to the Father, as here to the disciples, *Behold my hands and my feet*, Zech. xiii. 6, 7.

He appeals to their touch. *Handle me, and see*. He would not let Mary Magdalen touch him at that time, John xx. 17. But the disciples here are intrusted to do it, that they who were to preach his resurrection, and to suffer for doing so, might be themselves abundantly satisfied concerning it. He bid them handle him, that they might be convinced that he was not a spirit. If there were really no spirits or apparitions of spirits, as by this and other instances, it is plain the disciples did believe there were; now had been a proper time for Christ to have undeceived them, by telling them there were no such things; but he seems to take it for granted, that there have been, and may be, apparitions of spirits, else what needed so much pains to prove that he was not one? There were many hereticks in the primitive times, atheists, I rather think they were, who said that Christ had never any substantial body, but that it was a meer phantasm, which was neither really born, nor truly suffered; such wild notions as these, we are told, the Valentinians and Manichees had, and the followers of Simon Magus; they were called *Δοκίται* and *Φαντασμάται*, blessed be God these heresies are long since buried; and we know, and are sure, that Jesus Christ was no spirit or apparition, but had a true and real body, even after his resurrection.

2. He eats with them; to shew that he had a real and true body, and that he was willing to converse freely and familiarly with his disciples, as one friend with another. St. Peter lays a great stress upon this, Acts x. 41. *We did eat and drink with him, after he rose from the dead*.

1. When they saw his hands and his feet, yet they knew not what to say. *They believed not for joy, and wondered*, ver. 41. It was their infirmity that they believed not, that yet they believed not, *ἐτι ἀπιστοῦντες αὐτῷ*, they as yet being unbelievers. This very much corroborates the truth of Christ's resurrection, that the disciples were so slow to believe it. Instead of stealing away his body, and saying, *he is risen*, when he is not; as the chief priests suggested they would do, they are ready to say again and again, *he is not risen*, when he is. Their being incredulous of it at first, and insisting upon the utmost proofs of it, shews, that when afterwards they did believe it, and venture their all upon it, it was not but upon the fullest demonstration of the thing that could be.

But though it was their infirmity, yet it was an excusable one; for it was not from any contempt of the evidence offered them, that they believed not; But (1.) They believed not for joy, as

Jacob; when he was told that Joseph was alive; they thought it too good news to be true. When the faith and hope are therefore weak, because the love and desires are strong, that weak faith shall be helped, and not rejected. (2.) They wondered, they thought it not only too good, but too great, to be true, forgetting both the scriptures and the power of God.

2. For their further conviction and encouragement, he called for some meat. He sat down to meat with the two disciples at Emmaus, but it is not said that he did eat with them; now lest that should be made an objection, he here did actually eat with them and the rest, to shew that his body was really and truly returned to life; though he did not eat and drink, and converse constantly with them as he had done (and as Lazarus did after his resurrection, who not only returned to life, but to his former state of life, and to die again;) because it was not agreeable to the economy of that state he was risen to.

They gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb, ver. 42. The honey-comb, perhaps, was used as sauce to the broiled fish, for Canaan was a land flowing with honey. This was mean fare, yet if it be the fare of the disciples, their Master will fare as they do; because in the kingdom of our Father, they shall fare as he does, shall eat and drink with him in his kingdom.

Thirdly, The insight he gave them into the word of God, which they had heard and read, by which faith in the resurrection of Christ is wrought in them, and all the difficulties cleared.

1. He refers them to the word which they had heard from him, when he was with them, and puts them in mind of that, as the angel had done, ver. 44. *These are the words which I said unto you in private, many a time, while I was yet with you*. We should better understand what Christ doth, if we did but better remember what he hath said, and had but the art of comparing them together.

2. He refers them to the word they had read in the Old Testament, which the word they had heard from him directed them to. *All things must be fulfilled which were written*. Christ had given them this general hint, for the regulating of their expectations, that whatever they found written concerning the Messiah, in the Old Testament, must be fulfilled in him; what was written concerning his sufferings, as well as what was written concerning his kingdom, those God had joined together in the prediction, and it could not be thought they should be put asunder in the event. *All things must be fulfilled, even the hardest, even the heaviest, even the vinegar*; he could not die till he had that, because he could not till then say, *it is finished*. The several parts of the Old Testament are here mentioned, as containing each of them concerning Christ, *The law of Moses*, i. e. The Pentateuch, or the five books written by Moses; the prophets, containing not only the books that are purely prophetic, but those historical books that were written by prophetic men. The Psalms contain also the other writings, which they called the Hagiographa. See in what various ways of writing God did of old reveal his will; but all proceeded from one and the self-same Spirit, who by them gave notice of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah; for to him bare all the prophets witness.

3. By an immediate present work upon their minds, which they themselves could not but be sensible of; he gave them to apprehend the true intent and meaning of the Old Testament prophecies of Christ, and to see them all fulfilled in him, ver. 45. *Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures*. In his discourse with the two disciples, he took the veil from off the text, by opening the scriptures, here he took the veil from off the heart, by opening the mind. Observe here, (1.) That Jesus Christ by his Spirit operates on the minds of men, on the minds of all that are his: He has access to our spirits, and can immediately influence them. It is observable, how he did now after his resurrection, give a specimen of those two great operations of his Spirit upon the spirits of men; his enlightening the intellectual faculties with a divine light, when he opened the understandings of his disciples, and his invigorating of the active powers with a divine heat; when he made their hearts burn within them. (2.) Even good men need to have their understandings opened; for though they are not darkness, as they were by nature, yet in many things they are in the dark. David prays, *Open mine eyes. Give me an understanding*. And St. Paul, that knows so much of Christ, sees his need to learn more. (3.) Christ's way of working faith in the soul, and gaining the throne there, is, by opening the understanding, to discern the evidence of those things that are to be believed. Thus he comes into the soul by the door, while Satan as a thief and a robber climbs up some other way. (4.) The design of opening the understanding is, that we may understand the scriptures; not that we may be wise above what is written, but that we may be wiser in what is written, and may be made wise to salvation by it. The Spirit in the word, and the Spirit in the heart, say the same thing. Christ's scholars never learn above their Bibles in this world; but they need to be learning still more and more out of their Bibles, and to grow more ready and mighty in the scriptures. That we may have right thoughts of Christ, and our mistakes concerning him ratified, there needs no more, but to be made to understand the scriptures.

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Five times Christ was seen the same day that he rose; by Mary Magdalen alone in the garden; *Joh. xx. 14.* by the women, as they were going to tell the disciples, *Matth. xxviii. 9.* by Peter alone; by the two disciples going to Emmaus, and now at night by the eleven; which we have an account of in these verses, as also *Joh. xx. 19.* Observe,

1. The great surprise, which his appearing gave them. He came in among them very seasonably, as they were comparing notes concerning the proofs of his resurrection. As they thus spake, and were ready perhaps to put it to the question, whether the proofs produced amounted to evidence sufficient of their Master's resurrection, or no, and how they should proceed; Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and put it out of question. Note, Those who make the best use they can of their evidences for their comfort, may expect further assurances; and that the Spirit of Christ will witness with their spirits (as Christ here witnessed with the disciples, and confirmed their testimony) that they are the children of God, and risen with Christ. Observe (1.) The comfort Christ spoke to them. *Peace be unto you.* This intimates in general, that it was a kind visit, which Christ now made them, a visit of love and friendship. Though they had very unkindly deserted him in his sufferings, yet he takes the first opportunity of seeing them together; for he deals not with us as we deserve. They did not credit those who had seen him, therefore he comes himself, that they might not continue in their disconsolate incredulity. He had promised, that after his resurrection he would see them in Galilee, but so desirous was he to see them and satisfy them, that he anticipated the appointment, and sees them at Jerusalem. Note, Christ is often better than his word, but never worse. Now his first word to them was, *Peace be to you*, not in a way of compliment but of consolation. This was a common form of salutation among the Jews, and Christ would thus express his usual familiarity with them, though he was now entered into his state of exaltation. Many, when they are advanced, forget their own old friends, and take state upon them, but we see Christ as free with them as ever. Thus Christ would at the first word intimate to them, that he did not come to quarrel with Peter for denying him, and the rest for out-running him, no, he came peaceably, to signify to them that he had forgiven them and was reconciled to them. (2.) The fright which they put themselves into upon it, *ver. 37.* They were terrified, supposing that they had seen a spirit, because he came in among them without any noise, and was in the midst of them ere they were aware. The word used, *Matth. xiv. 26.* when they said, *it is a spirit*, is *φάντασμα*, it is a spectre, an apparition; but the word here used is *πνεῦμα*, the word that properly signifies a spirit; they supposed it to be a spirit not clothed with a real body. Though we have an alliance and correspondence with the world of spirits, and are hastening to it, yet while we are here in this world of sense and matter, it is a terror to us to have a spirit so far change its own nature as to become visible to us, and conversable with us, for it is something, and bodes something very extraordinary.

2. The great satisfaction, which his discourse gave them; wherein we have,

First, The reproof he gave them for their causeless fears, *ver. 38.* Why are ye troubled, and why do frightful thoughts arise in your hearts? Observe here, (1.) That when at any time we are troubled, thoughts are apt to rise in our hearts, that do us hurt. Sometimes the trouble is the effect of the thoughts that arise in our hearts, our griefs and fears take rise from those things that are the creatures of our own fancy: sometimes the thoughts arising in the heart, are the effect of the trouble; without are fightings, and then within are fears. Those that are melancholy and troubled in mind, have thoughts arising in their hearts, which reflect dishonour upon God, and create disquiet to themselves. *I am cut off from thy sight. The Lord has forsaken and forgotten me.*

(2.) That many of the troublesome thoughts with which our minds are disquieted, arise from our mistakes concerning Christ; they here thought they had seen a spirit, when they saw Christ, and that put them into this fright; we forget that Christ is our elder brother, and look upon him to be at as great a distance from us as the world of spirits is from this world, and therewith terrify ourselves. When Christ is by his Spirit convincing and humbling us, when he is by his providence trying and converting us, we mistake him, as if he designed our hurt, and that troubles us.

(3.) That



(3.) That all the troublesome thoughts which rise in our hearts at any time, are known to the Lord Jesus, even at the first rise of them; and they are displeasing to him. He chid his disciples for such thoughts, to teach us to chide ourselves for them. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou troubled? why do thoughts arise,* that are neither true nor good, that have neither foundation, nor fruit, but hinder our joy in God, disfit us for our duty, give advantage to Satan, and deprive us of the comforts laid up for us?

Secondly, The proof he gave them of his resurrection, both for the silencing of their fears, by convincing them that he was not a spirit; and for the strengthening of their faith in that doctrine, which they were to preach to the world, by giving them a full satisfaction concerning his resurrection, which if not true, their faith and preaching was all vain. Two proofs he gives them.

1. He shews them his body, particularly, *his hands and his feet*. They saw that he had the shape and features and exact resemblance of their Master, but is it not his ghost? No, faith Christ, *Behold my hands and my feet*, you see I have hands and feet, and therefore have a true body; you see I can move these hands and feet, and therefore have a living body; and you see the marks of the nails in my hands and feet, and therefore it is my own body, the same that you saw crucified, and not a borrowed one. He lays down this principle, that a spirit has not flesh and bones, it is not compounded of gross matter, shaped into various members, and consisting of divers heterogeneous parts, as our bodies are; he doth not tell us what a spirit is, it is time enough to know that when we go to the world of spirits, but what it is not, *It has not flesh and bones*. Now hence he infers, *it is I myself*; whom you have been so intimately acquainted with, and have had such familiar conversation with; it is *I myself* whom you have reason to rejoice in and not to be afraid of. Those who know Christ aright, and know him as theirs will have no reason to be terrified at his appearances, at his approaches.

He appeals to their sight, shews them *his hands and his feet*, which were pierced with the nails; Christ retained the marks of them in his glorified body, that they might be proofs that it was he himself, and he was willing they should be seen; he afterwards shewed them to Thomas, for he is not ashamed of his sufferings for us; little reason then have we to be ashamed of them, or of ours, for him. As he shewed his wounds here to his disciples for the enforcing of his instructions to them, so he shewed them to his Father, for the enforcing of his intercessions with him. He appears in heaven as a lamb that had been slain, Rev. v. 6. *his blood speaks*, Heb. xii. 24. He makes intercession in the virtue of his satisfaction; he faith to the Father, as here to the disciples, *Behold my hands and my feet*, Zech. xiii. 6, 7.

He appeals to their touch. *Handle me, and see*. He would not let Mary Magdalen touch him at that time, John xx. 17. But the disciples here are intrusted to do it, that they who were to preach his resurrection, and to suffer for doing so, might be themselves abundantly satisfied concerning it. He bid them handle him, that they might be convinced that he was not a spirit. If there were really no spirits or apparitions of spirits, as by this and other instances, it is plain the disciples did believe there were; now had been a proper time for Christ to have undeceived them, by telling them there were no such things; but he seems to take it for granted, that there have been, and may be, apparitions of spirits, else what needed so much pains to prove that he was not one? There were many hereticks in the primitive times, atheists, I rather think they were, who said that Christ had never any substantial body, but that it was a meer phantasm, which was neither really born, nor truly suffered; such wild notions as these, we are told, the Valentinians and Manichees had, and the followers of Simon Magus; they were called *Δοκίται* and *Φαντασισαί*, blessed be God these heresies are long since buried; and we know, and are sure, that Jesus Christ was no spirit or apparition, but had a true and real body, even after his resurrection.

2. He eats with them; to shew that he had a real and true body, and that he was willing to converse freely and familiarly with his disciples, as one friend with another. St. Peter lays a great stress upon this, Acts x. 41. *We did eat and drink with him, after he rose from the dead*.

1. When they saw his hands and his feet, yet they knew not what to say. *They believed not for joy, and wondered*, ver. 41. It was their infirmity that they believed not, that yet they believed not, *οὐκ ἠπίσταντο αὐτῷ*, they as yet being unbelievers. This very much corroborates the truth of Christ's resurrection, that the disciples were so slow to believe it. Instead of stealing away his body, and saying, *he is risen*, when he is not; as the chief priests suggested they would do, they are ready to say again and again, *he is not risen*, when he is. Their being incredulous of it at first, and insisting upon the utmost proofs of it; shews, that when afterwards they did believe it, and venture their all upon it, it was not but upon the fullest demonstration of the thing that could be.

But though it was their infirmity, yet it was an excusable one; or it was not from any contempt of the evidence offered them, that they believed not: But (1.) *They believed not for joy*, as

Jacob, when he was told that Joseph was alive; they thought it too good news to be true. When the faith and hope are therefore weak, because the love and desires are strong, that weak faith shall be helped, and not rejected. (2.) *They wondered*, they thought it not only too good, but too great, to be true, forgetting both the scriptures and the power of God.

2. For their further conviction and encouragement, he called for some meat. He sat down to meat with the two disciples at Emmaus, but it is not said that he did eat with them; now left that should be made an objection, he here did actually eat with them and the rest, to shew that his body was really and truly returned to life; though he did not eat and drink, and converse constantly with them as he had done (and as Lazarus did after his resurrection, who not only returned to life, but to his former state of life, and to die again;) because it was not agreeable to the oeconomy of that state he was risen to.

They gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb, ver. 42. The honey-comb, perhaps, was used as sauce to the broiled fish, for Canaan was a land flowing with honey. This was mean fare, yet if it be the fare of the disciples, their Master will fare as they do; because in the kingdom of our Father, they shall fare as he does, shall eat and drink with him in his kingdom.

Thirdly, The insight he gave them into the word of God, which they had heard and read, by which faith in the resurrection of Christ is wrought in them, and all the difficulties cleared.

1. He refers them to the word which they had heard from him, when he was with them, and puts them in mind of that, as the angel had done, ver. 44. *These are the words which I said unto you in private, many a time, while I was yet with you*. We should better understand what Christ doth, if we did but better remember what he hath said, and had but the art of comparing them together.

2. He refers them to the word they had read in the Old Testament, which the word they had heard from him directed them to. *All things must be fulfilled which were written*. Christ had given them this general hint, for the regulating of their expectations, that whatever they found written concerning the Messiah, in the Old Testament, must be fulfilled in him; what was written concerning his sufferings, as well as what was written concerning his kingdom, those God had joined together in the prediction, and it could not be thought they should be put asunder in the event. *All things must be fulfilled, even the hardest, even the heaviest, even the vinegar*; he could not die till he had that, because he could not till then say, *it is finished*. The several parts of the Old Testament are here mentioned, as containing each of them concerning Christ, *The law of Moses*, i. e. The Pentateuch, or the five books written by Moses; the prophets, containing not only the books that are purely prophetic, but those historical books that were written by prophetic men. The Psalms contain also the other writings, which they called the *Hagiographa*. See in what various ways of writing God did of old reveal his will; but all proceeded from one and the self-same Spirit, who by them gave notice of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah; for to him bare all the prophets witness.

3. By an immediate present work upon their minds, which they themselves could not but be sensible of; he gave them to apprehend the true intent and meaning of the Old Testament prophecies of Christ, and to see them all fulfilled in him, ver. 45. *Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures*. In his discourse with the two disciples, he took the veil from off the text, by opening the scriptures, here he took the veil from off the heart, by opening the mind. Observe here, (1.) That Jesus Christ by his Spirit operates on the minds of men, on the minds of all that are his: He has access to our spirits, and can immediately influence them. It is observable, how he did now after his resurrection, give a specimen of those two great operations of his Spirit upon the spirits of men; his enlightening the intellectual faculties with a divine light, when he opened the understandings of his disciples, and his invigorating of the active powers with a divine heat; when he made their hearts burn within them. (2.) Even good men need to have their understandings opened; for though they are not darkness, as they were by nature, yet in many things they are in the dark: David prays, *Open mine eyes*. Give me an understanding. And St. Paul, that knows so much of Christ, sees his need to learn more. (3.) Christ's way of working faith in the soul, and gaining the throne there, is, by opening the understanding, to discern the evidence of those things that are to be believed. Thus he comes into the soul by the door, while Satan as a thief and a robber climbs up some other way. (4.) The design of opening the understanding is, that we may understand the scriptures; not that we may be wise above what is written, but that we may be wiser in what is written, and may be made wise to salvation by it. The Spirit in the word, and the Spirit in the heart, say the same thing. Christ's scholars never learn above their Bibles in this world; but they need to be learning still more and more out of their Bibles, and to grow more ready and mighty in the scriptures. That we may have right thoughts of Christ, and our mistakes concerning him ratified, there needs no more, but to be made to understand the scriptures.

Fourthly,



Fourthly, The instructions he gave them as *apostles*, who were to be employed in setting up his kingdom in the world. They expected, while their Master was with them, that they should be preferred to posts of honour; which they thought themselves quite disappointed of, when he was dead: No, saith he, you are now to enter upon them, *Ye are to be witnesses of these things*, ver. 48. to carry the notice of them to all the world; not only to report them as matter of news, but to *assert* them, as evidence given upon the trial of the great cause that has been so long depending between God and Satan, the issue of which must be, the casting down; and casting out of the *prince of this world*. You are fully assured of these things yourselves, you are eye and ear-witnesses of them, go and assure the world of them, and the same Spirit that has enlightened you, shall go along with you for the enlightening of others. Now here they are told,

1. *What they must preach*; they must preach the gospel, must preach the *New Testament*, as the full accomplishment of the *Old*, as the continuation and conclusion of divine revelation. They must take their Bibles along with them (especially when they preached to the Jews: nay, and Peter in his first sermon to the Gentiles, directed them to consult the prophets, *Acts* x. 43.) and must shew people how it was written of old concerning the Messiah, and the glories and graces of his kingdom, and then must tell them, how upon their certain knowledge all this was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus.

(1.) The great *gospel truth* concerning the *death and resurrection* of Jesus Christ, must be *published* to the children of men, ver. 46. *Thus it was written* in the sealed book of the divine counsels, from eternity, the volume of that book of the covenant of redemption; and thus it was written in the open book of the Old Testament, among the things revealed, and therefore *thus it behoved Christ to suffer*, for the divine counsels must be performed, and care taken, that no word of God fall to the ground. Go and tell the world, (1.) That *Christ suffered*, as it was written of him. Go preach *Christ crucified*, be not ashamed of his cross, not ashamed of a suffering Jesus. Tell them what he suffered, and why he suffered, and how all the scriptures of the Old Testament were fulfilled in his sufferings. Tell them that it *behoved him to suffer*, that it was necessary to the taking away of the sin of the world, and the deliverance of mankind from death and ruin: nay, it *became him* to be perfected through sufferings, *Heb.* ii. 10. (2.) That he rose from the dead on the *third day*, by which not only all the offence of the cross was rolled away, but he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and in this also the *scriptures* were fulfilled, see *1 Cor.* xv. 3, 4. Go tell the world how often you saw him, after he rose from the dead, and how intimately you conversed with him: *Your eyes see* (as Joseph said to his brethren, when his discovering of himself to them was as life from the dead) *that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you*, *Gen.* xlv. 12. Go and tell them then, that he that *was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of death and the grave*.

(2.) The great *gospel duty* of *repentance* must be *pressed* upon the children of men. *Repentance for sin* must be preached in *Christ's name*, and by his authority, ver. 47. *All men every where* must be called and *commanded to repent*, *Acts* xvii. 30. Go and tell people that the God that made them, and the Lord that bought them, expect and require that immediately upon this notice given, they turn from the worship of the gods they have made, to the worship of the God that made them; and not only so, but from serving the interests of the world and the flesh, they must turn to the service of God in Christ; must mortify all sinful habits, and forsake all sinful practices. Their hearts and lives must be changed, and they must be universally renewed and reformed.

(3.) The great *gospel privilege* of the *remission of sins* must be *proposed* to all, and assured to all, that *repent and believe the gospel*. Go tell a guilty world that stands convicted and condemned at God's bar, that there is an act of indemnity passed the royal assent, which all that repent and believe shall have the benefit of, and not only be *pardoned*, but *preferred* by. Tell them, *there is hope* concerning them.

2. *To whom they must preach*: whither must they carry these proposals, and how far doth their commission extend. They are here told, (1.) That they must preach this *among all nations*. They must disperse themselves, like the sons of Noah after the flood, some one way, and some another, and carry this light along with them, wherever they went. The prophets had preached *repentance and remission* to the Jews, but the apostles must preach them to all the world. None are *exempted* from the obligations the gospel lays upon men to *repent*, nor are any *excluded* from those inestimable benefits which are included in the remission of sins, but those that by their unbelief and impenitency, put a bar in their own door.

(2.) That they must *begin at Jerusalem*: There they must preach their first *gospel sermon*; there the *gospel church* must be first formed; there the *gospel-day* must dawn, and thence that light shall go forth, which must take hold on the ends of the earth. And why must they begin there? (1.) Because *thus it was written*, and therefore it *behoved them* to take this method. *The word of the Lord must go forth from Jerusalem*, *Isa.* ii. 3. And see *Joel* ii. 32.—iii. 16. *Obad.* 21. *Zech.* xiv. 8. (2.) Because

there the matters of fact, on which the gospel was founded, were transacted; and therefore there they were first attested, where if there had been any just cause for it, they might be best contested and disproved. So strong, so bright, is the first shining forth of the glory of the risen Redeemer, that it dares face those daring enemies of his, that had put him to an ignominious death, and sets them at defiance. *Begin at Jerusalem*, that the chief priests may try their strength to crush the gospel, and may rage to see themselves disappointed. (3.) Because he would give us a further example of forgiving enemies. Jerusalem had put the greatest affronts imaginable upon him, both the rulers and the multitude, for which that city might justly have been excepted by name out of the act of indemnity: No, so far from that, the first offer of gospel grace is made to Jerusalem, and thousands there, are in a little time brought to partake of that grace.

3. *What assistance they should have in preaching*; it is a vast undertaking they are here called to, a very large and difficult province, especially considering the opposition this service would meet with, and the sufferings it would be attended with; if therefore they ask, *Who is sufficient for these things?* Here is an answer ready, ver. 49. *Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, and ye shall be endued with power from on high*. He here assures them, that in a little time the Spirit should be poured out upon them, in greater measures than ever, and they should thereby be furnished with all those gifts and graces which were necessary to their discharge of this great trust: and therefore they must *tarry at Jerusalem*, and not enter upon it till this be done. Note, 1. Those who *receive the Holy Ghost*, are thereby *endued with a power from on high*, a supernatural power; a power above any of their own: it is *from on high*, and therefore draws the soul upward, and makes it to *aim high*. 2. Christ's apostles could never have planted his gospel, and set up his kingdom in the world as they did, if they had not been endued with such a power, and their admirable achievements prove that there was an excellency of power going along with them. (3.) *This power from on high* was the *promise of the Father*, the great promise of the New Testament, as the promise of the coming of Christ, was of the Old Testament. And if it be the *promise of the Father*, we may be sure that the promise is *inviolable*, and the thing promised *invaluable*. (4.) Christ would not leave his disciples, till the time was just at hand for the performing of this promise. It was but ten days after the *ascension* of Christ, that there came the *descent* of the Spirit. (5.) Christ's ambassadors must *tarry* till they have their powers, and not venture upon their embassy till they have received full instructions and credentials, though one would think never was such haste as now for the preaching of the gospel, yet the preachers must *tarry* till they be endued with power from on high, and *tarry at Jerusalem*, though a place of danger, because there this promise of the Father was to find them, *Joel* ii. 28.

50. ¶ And he led them out as far as to Bethany: and he lift up his hands, and blessed them. 51. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. 52. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: 53. And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

This evangelist omits the solemn meeting between Christ and his disciples in Galilee; but what he said to them there, and at other interviews, he tacks to what he said to them at the first visit he made them, on the evening of the day he rose; and has now nothing more to account for, but his ascension into heaven, which we have a very brief narrative of, in these verses: in which we are told,

First, How solemnly Christ took leave of his disciples: Christ's design being to reconcile heaven and earth, and continue a days-man between them, it was necessary he should lay his hands on them both, and in order thereunto that he should *pass* and *repass*: He had business to do in both worlds, and accordingly came from heaven to earth in his incarnation, to dispatch his business here, which when he had finished, he returned to heaven to reside there, and negotiate our affairs with the Father: Observe,

1. From whence he ascended; from Bethany, near Jerusalem, adjoining to the *mount of Olives*. There he had done eminent services for his Father's glory, and there he entered upon his glory. There was the garden in which his sufferings began, there he was in his agony, and Bethany signifies *the house of sorrow*: Those that would go to heaven must ascend thither from the house of sufferings and sorrow, must go by agonies to their joys. The mount of Olives was pitched upon long since to be the place of Christ's ascension, *Zech.* xiv. 4. *His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives*. And here it was, that a while ago he began his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, *chap.* xix. 29.

2. Who were the witnesses of his ascension: He led out his disciples to see him: probably it was very early in the morning that he ascended, before people were stirring, for he never shewed himself openly to all the people, after his resurrection, but only



to *chosen witnesses*. The disciples did not see him rise out of the grave, because his resurrection was capable of being proved by their seeing him alive afterwards : but they saw him *ascend* into heaven, because they could not otherwise have an *ocular demonstration* of his ascension. They were *led out* on purpose to see him ascend ; had their eye upon him when he ascended, and were not looking another way.

3. What was the farewell he gave them. *He lift up his hands, and blessed them*. He did not go away in displeasure, but in love, he left a blessing behind him ; *He lift up his hands*, as the high-priest did when he blessed the people, see *Lev. ix. 22*. He blessed as one having authority, commanded the blessing, which he had purchased ; he *blessed them* as Jacob blessed his sons. The apostles were now as the representatives of the twelve tribes, so that in blessing them he blessed all his spiritual Israel, and put his Father's name upon them. He blessed them as Jacob blessed his sons, and Moses the tribes at parting, to shew that having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

4. How he left them, while *he was blessing them, he was parted from them*, not as if he were taken away before he had said all he had to say, but to intimate, that his being parted from them did not put an end to his blessing of them, for the intercession which he went to heaven to make for all his, is a continuation of that blessing : He *began* to bless them on earth, but he went to heaven to *go on* with it. Christ was now sending his apostles to preach his gospel to the world, and he gives them his blessing, not for *themselves* only but to be conferred in his name upon *all* that should believe on him through their word, for in him *all the families of the earth were to be blessed*.

5. How his ascension is described. (1.) He was *parted from them*, was taken from their head, as Elijah from Elisha's. Note, The dearest friends must part. Those that love us, and pray for us, and instruct us, must be *parted from us*. The bodily presence of Christ himself was not to be expected always in this world ; those that knew him after the flesh, must now henceforth know him so no more. (2.) He was *carried up into heaven* ; not by force, but by his own act and deed. As he rose, so he ascended by his own power, yet attended by angels. There needed no chariot of fire, or horses of fire, he knew the way, and being the *Lord from heaven*, could go back himself. He ascended in a cloud, as the angel in the smoke of Manoah's sacrifice, *Judg. xiii. 20*.

Secondly, How cheerfully his disciples continued their attendance on him, and on God through him, even now he was parted from them.

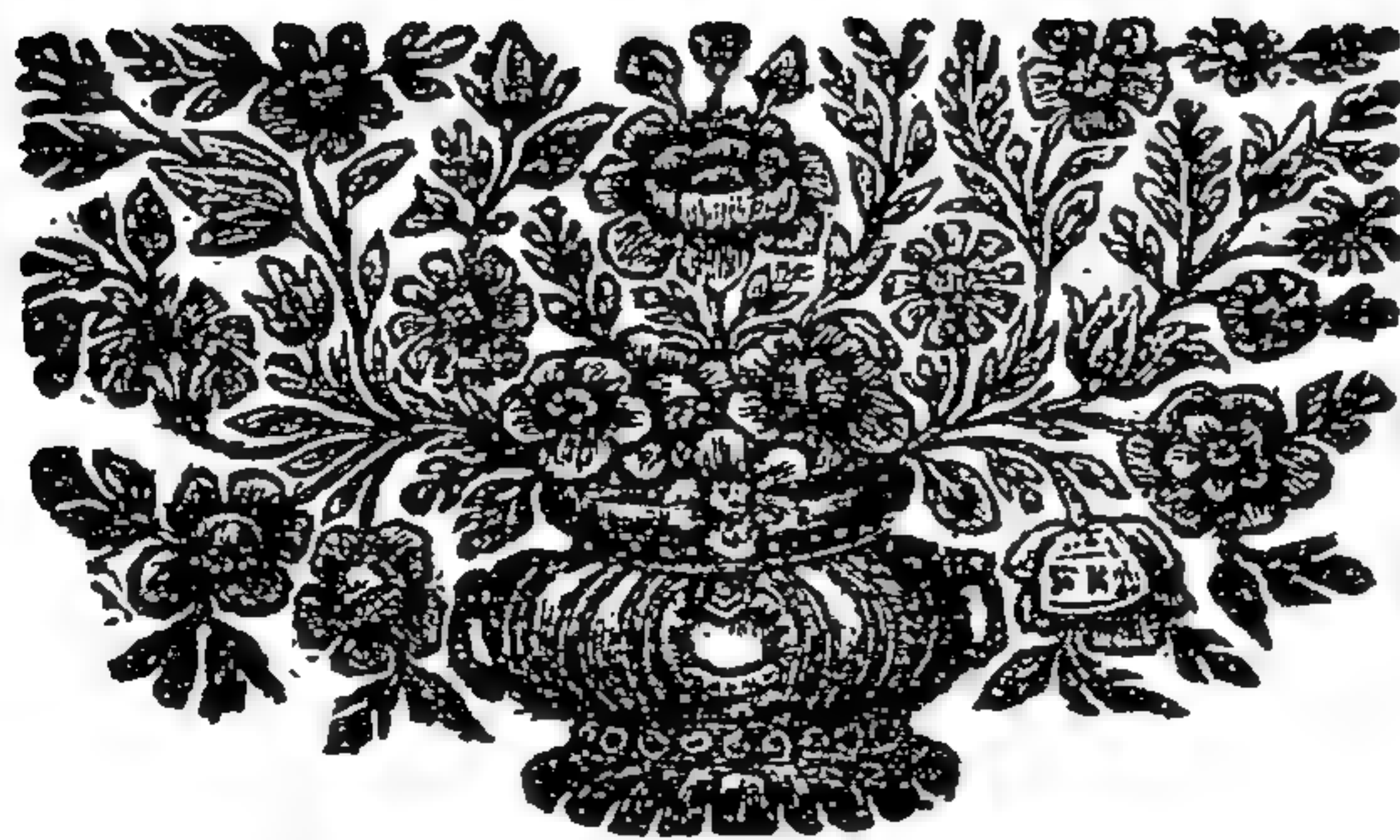
1. They paid their homage to him at his going away, to signify, that though he was going into a far country, yet they would

continue his loyal subjects, that were willing to have him reign over them. *They worshipped him*, ver. 52. Note, Those that receive *blessings* from Christ, he expects *adorations* from them. He *blessed them*, in token of gratitude for which they *worshipped him*. This fresh display of Christ's glory, drew from them fresh acknowledgments and adorations of it. They knew that though he was *parted from them*, yet he could and did take notice of their adorations of him ; the cloud that received him out of their sight, did not put them or their services out of his sight.

2. They *returned to Jerusalem with great joy*. There they were ordered to continue till the Spirit should be poured out upon them, and thither they went accordingly, though it was into the mouth of danger. Thither they went, and there they staid *with great joy*. This was a wonderful change, and an effect of the opening of their understandings. When Christ told them he must leave them, sorrow filled their hearts ; yet now they see him go, they are *filled with joy*, being convinced at length, that it was expedient for them, and for the church, that he should go away to send the Comforter. Note, The glory of Christ is the joy, the exceeding joy, of all true believers, even while they are here in this world ; much more will it be so when they go to the new Jerusalem, and find him there in his glory.

3. They abounded in acts of devotion, while they were in expectation of the promise of the Father, ver. 53. (1.) They attended the temple-service at the hours of prayer ; God had not as yet quite forsaken it, and therefore they did not. *They were continually in the temple*, as their Master was, when he was at Jerusalem. *The Lord loves the gates of Zion*, and so should we. Some think they had their place of meeting, as disciples, in some of the chambers of the temple, which belonged to some Levite that was *well affected* to them ; but others think it is not likely that that either could be *concealed from*, or would be *connived at* by, the chief priests and *rulers of the temple*. (2.) Temple sacrifices, they knew were superseded by Christ's sacrifice, but the temple songs they joined in. Note, While we are waiting for God's promises, we must go forth to meet them with our praises. Praising and blessing God is work that is never out of season ; and nothing doth better prepare the mind for the receiving of the Holy Ghost, than holy joy and praise. Fears are silenced, sorrows sweetened and allayed, and hopes kept up.

The *amen* that concludes seems to be added by the church, and every believer to the reading of the gospel ; signifying an assent to the truths of the gospel, and a hearty concurrence with all the disciples of Christ in praising and blessing God. *Amen*. Let him be continually praised and blessed.





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S t. J O H N.

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*IT is not material to enquire when and where this gospel was written; we are sure it was given by inspiration of God to John, the brother of James, one of the twelve apostles, distinguished by the honourable character of that disciple whom Jesus loved; one of the first three of the worthies of the Son of David, whom he took to be the witnesses of his retirements, particularly of his transfiguration and agony. The antients tell us, that John lived longest of all the twelve apostles, and was the only one of them that died a natural death, all the rest suffering martyrdom; and some of them say he wrote this gospel at Ephesus, at the request of the ministers of the several churches of Asia, in opposition to the heresy of Cerinthus, and the Ebionites, who held that our Lord was a meer man. It seems most probable that he wrote it before his banishment into the isle of Patmos, for there he wrote his Apocalypse, the close of which seems designed for the closing up of the canon of scripture; and if so, this gospel was not written after. I cannot therefore give credit to those later fathers, who say, he wrote it in his banishment, or after his return from it, many years after the destruction of Jerusalem; when he was ninety years old, saith one of them; when he was an hundred, saith another of them. However, it is clear, he wrote last of the four evangelists, and comparing his gospel with theirs, we may observe, (1.) That he relates what they had omitted; he brings up the rear, and his gospel is as the rearward, or gathering-host, it gleans up what they had passed by. Thus there was a later collection of Solomon's wise sayings, Prov. xxv. 1. and yet far short of what he delivered, 1 Kings iv. 32. (2.) That he gives us more of the mystery of that, which the other evangelists gave us only the history of. It was necessary that the matters of fact should be first settled, which was done in their declarations of those things which Jesus began both to do and teach, Luke i. 1. Acts i. 1. But that being done out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, John goes on to perfection, Heb. vi. 1. not laying again the foundation, but building upon it; leading us more within the veil. Some of the Antients observe, that the other evangelists wrote more of the τὰ σωματικά, the bodily things of Christ; but John writes of the τὰ πνευματικά, the spiritual things of the gospel, the life and soul of it; therefore some have called this gospel the key of the evangelists. Here it is that a door is opened in heaven, and the first voice we hear is, Come up hither; come up higher; some of the Antients, that supposed the four living creatures in John's vision to represent the four evangelists, make John himself to be the flying-eagle, so high doth he soar, and so clearly doth he see into divine and heavenly things.*



## C H A P. I.

*The scope and design of this chapter is, to confirm our faith in Christ as the eternal Son of God, and the true Messiah and Saviour of the world, that we may be brought to receive him, and rely upon him, as our prophet, priest, and king, and to give up ourselves to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him. In order to this, we have here, (1.) An account given of him by the inspired penman himself, fairly laying down in the beginning, what he designed his whole book should be the proof of, ver. 1—5. And again, ver. 10—14. And again, ver. 16—18. (2.) The testimony of John Baptist concerning him, ver. 6—9. And again, ver. 15. But most fully and particularly, ver. 19—37. (3.) His own manifestation of himself to Andrew and Peter, ver. 38—42. to Philip and Nathanael, ver. 43—51.*

**I**N the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2. The same was in the beginning with God. 3. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.

Austin saith (*de Civ. Dei*, l. 10. c. 29.) that his friend Simplicianus told him, he had heard a Platonick philosopher say, That these first verses of St. John's gospel were *worthy to be written in letters of gold*. The learned Francis Junius, in the account he gives of his own life, tells how he was in his youth infected with loose notions in religion, and by the grace of God was wonderfully recovered, by reading accidentally these verses in a Bible, which his father had designedly laid in his way; he saith, that he observed such a divinity in the argument, such an authority and majesty in the style, that his flesh trembled, and he was struck into such an amazement, that for a whole day he scarce knew where he was, or what he did, and from thence he dates the beginning of his being religious. Let us enquire what there is in those strong lines. The evangelist here lays down the great truth he is to prove, that Jesus Christ is God, one with the Father. Observe,

First, Who he speaks of. *The word*, ὁ λόγος. This is an idiom peculiar to John's writings. See 1 *John* i. 1. chap. v. 7. *Rev.* xix. 13. yet some think Christ is meant by *the Word*, *Acts* x. 32. *Heb.* iv. 12. *Luke* i. 2.

The Chaldee paraphrase very frequently calls the Messiah (*Mesra*) the *Word* of Jehovah, and speaks of many things in the Old Testament, said to be done by *the Lord*, as done by that *Word of the Lord*; even the vulgar Jews were taught, that the *Word of God* was the same with God. The evangelist, in the close of his discourse, ver. 18. plainly tells us, why he calls Christ *the Word*, because he is the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, and has declared him. *Word* is two-fold; λόγος, word conceived; and λόγος περφορεῖται, word uttered. The λόγος ὁ ἔσω and ὁ ἔξω, ratio and oratio.

1. There is the *word conceived*; that is, *thought*, which is the first and only immediate product and conception of the soul, all the operations of which are performed by *thought*, and it is one with the soul. And thus the second person in the Trinity is fitly called *the Word*; for he is the *first begotten of the Father*; that eternal essential wisdom which *the Lord possessed*, as the soul doth its thought, *in the beginning of his way*, *Prov.* viii. 22. There is nothing we are more sure of than *that we think*, yet nothing we are more in the dark about than *how we think*; who can declare the generation of *thought* in the soul? Surely then the generations and births of the eternal mind, may well be allowed to be great mysteries of godliness, the bottom of which we cannot fathom, while yet we adore the depth.

2. There is the *word uttered*, and that is *speech*, the chief and most natural indication of the mind. And thus Christ is *the Word*, for by him God has in *these last days spoken to us*, *Heb.* i. 1. and has directed us to *hear him*, *Matt.* xvii. 5. He has made known God's mind to us as a man's word or speech makes known his thoughts, as far as he pleaseth, and no further. Christ is called, that *wonderful speaker*, *Dan.* viii. 13. The *speaker of things hidden*, and *strange*. He is *the word speaking from God to us*, and to God for us. John Baptist was *the voice*, but Christ *the word*: being *the word*, he is *the truth*, the *amen*, the *faithful witness* of the mind of God.

Secondly, What he saith of him, enough to prove beyond contradiction that he is God. He asserts,

1. His existence in the beginning. *In the beginning was the Word*. This speaks his existence, not only before his incarnation, but before all time. The beginning of time, in which all creatures were produced, and brought into being, found this eternal

word in being. The world was *from* the beginning, but the word was *in* the beginning. Eternity is usually expressed, by being *before the foundation of the world*. The eternity of God is so described, *Psal.* xc. 2. *Before the mountains were brought forth*. So *Prov.* viii. 23. The Word had a being before the world had a beginning. He that *was* in the beginning *never* begun, and therefore *ever* was, ἀρχεῖν. So Nonnus.

2. His co-existence with the Father. *The Word was with God, and the Word was God*. Let none say, that when we invite them to Christ, we would draw them from God, for Christ is *with God*, and *is God*; it is repeated again, ver. 2. *the same*; the very same that we believe in and preach; was *in the beginning with God*, i. e. he was so from eternity. In the beginning the world was *from God*, as it was created by him, but the Word was *with God*, as ever with him. The Word was with God, (1.) In respect of *essence and substance*: for *the Word was God*; a distinct person or substance, for he was *with God*, and yet the same in substance, for he *was God*, *Heb.* i. 3. (2.) In respect of *com- placency and felicity*; there was a glory and happiness which Christ had *with God*, before the world was, *John* xvii. 5. the Son infinitely happy in the enjoyment of his Father's bosom, and no less the Father's delight, the Son of his love, *Prov.* viii. 30. (3.) In respect of *counsel and design*. The mystery of man's redemption by this Word incarnate, was *hid in God* before all worlds, *Eph.* iii. 9. He that undertook to *bring us to God* (1 *Pet.* iii. 18.) was himself from eternity *with God*; so that this grand affair of man's reconciliation to God, was concerted between the Father and Son from eternity, and they understand one another perfectly well in it; *Zech.* vi. 13. *Matt.* xi. 27. He was *by him as one brought up with him* for this service, *Prov.* viii. 30. He was *with God*, and therefore is said to *come forth from the Father*.

3. His agency in making the world, ver. 3. This is here, (1.) Expressly asserted, *All things were made by him*. He was *with God*, not only so as to be acquainted with the divine counsels from eternity, but to be *active* in the divine operations in the beginning of time. *Then was I by him*, *Prov.* viii. 30. God made the world *by a word*, *Psal.* xxxiii. 6. and Christ was *that word*. By him, not as a subordinate instrument, but as a co-ordinate agent, God *made the world*, *Heb.* i. 2. not as the workman cuts by his ax, but as the body sees by the eye. (2.) The contrary is denied. *Without him was not any thing made that was made*, from the highest angel to the meanest worm; God the Father did nothing without him in that work. Now, (1.) This proves that *he is God*, for he that *built all things is God*, *Heb.* iii. 4. The God of Israel often proved himself to be God with this, that he *made all things*, *Isa.* xl. 12, 28. chap. xlii. 5. and see *Jer.* x. 11, 12. (2.) This proves the excellency of the Christian religion; the author and founder of it is the same who was the author and founder of the world. How excellent must that constitution needs be, which derives its institution from him who is the fountain of all excellency! When we worship Christ we worship him, to whom the patriarchs gave honour, as the Creator of the world, and on whom all creatures depend. (3.) This shews how well qualified he was for the work of our redemption and salvation; help was laid upon one that was mighty indeed, for it was laid upon him that made all things; and he is appointed the author of our blifs, that was the author of our being.

4. The original of life and light that is in him, ver. 4. *In him was life*. This further proves that he is God, and every way qualified for his undertaking; for, (1.) He has *life in himself*; not only the *true God*, but the *living God*. God is life, he swears by himself, when he saith, *As I live*. (2.) All living creatures have their life in him; not only all the *matter* of the creation was *made* by him, but all the *life* too that is in the creation is derived from him, and supported by him. It was the word of God that produced the *moving creatures having life*, *Gen.* i. 20. *Acts* xvii. 25. He is that word by which man lives, more than by bread, *Matt.* iv. 4. (3.) Reasonable creatures have their *light* from him; that *life*, which is *the light of men*, comes from him. Life in man is something greater and nobler than it is in other creatures, it is *rational*, and not merely *animal*; when man became a *living soul* his life was *light*, his capacities such as distinguished him from, and dignified him above the beasts that perish. The *spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord*, and it was the eternal Word that lighted this candle. The light of reason, as well as the life of sense, is derived from him and depends upon him. This proves him fit to undertake our salvation; for life and light, spiritual and eternal life and light, are the two great things that fallen man; who lies so much under the power of *death* and *darkness*, has need of. From whom may we better expect the light of divine revelation than from him, who gave us the light of human reason? and if when God gave us natural life, that life was in his Son, how readily should we receive the gospel-record, that he hath given us *eternal life*, and *that life too is in his Son*?

5. The manifestation of him to the children of men. It might be objected, if this eternal Word was all in all thus in the creation of the world, whence is it that he has been so little taken notice of and regarded? To this he answers, ver. 5. *The light shines, but the darkness comprehends it not*. Observe,



1. The discovery of the eternal Word to the lapsed world, even before he was manifested in the flesh. *The light shineth in darkness.* Light is self-evidencing, and will make itself known; this light, from whence the light of men comes, hath shined, and doth shine. (1.) The eternal Word, as God, shines in the darkness of natural conscience. Though men by the fall are become darkness, yet that which may be known of God is manifested in them; see Rom. i. 19, 20. The light of nature, is this light shining in darkness. Something of the power of the divine word, both as creating, and as commanding, all mankind has an innate sense of; were it not for that, this earth would be a hell, a place of utter darkness; blessed be God it is not so yet. (2.) The eternal Word, as Mediator, shone, in the darkness of the Old Testament types and figures, and the prophecies and promises which were of the Messiah, from the beginning. He that had commanded the light of this world to shine out of darkness, was himself long a light shining in darkness, there was a veil upon this light, 2 Cor. iii. 13.

2. The disability of the degenerate world to receive this discovery; the darkness comprehended it not; the most of men received the grace of God in these discoveries in vain. (1.) The world of mankind comprehended not the natural light that was in their understandings, but became vain in their imaginations concerning the eternal God, and the eternal Word, Rom. i. 21, 27. The darkness of error and sin over-powered and quite eclipsed this light. God spoke once, yea, twice, but man perceived it not. Job xxxiii. 14. (2.) The Jews that had the light of the Old Testament, yet comprehended not Christ in it. As there was a veil upon Moses's face, so there was upon the peoples hearts. In the darkness of the types and shadows the light shone, but such was the darkness of their understandings, that they could not see it. It was therefore requisite, that Christ should come both to rectify the errors of the Gentile world, and to improve the truths of the Jewish church.

6. ¶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. 8. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. 9. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.

The evangelist designs to bring in John Baptist, bearing an honourable testimony to Jesus Christ. Now in these verses, before he doth that,

First, He gives us some account of this witness he is about to produce. His name is John; which signifies gracious; his conversation was austere, but he was not the less gracious. Now,

1. We are here told concerning him in general, that he was a man sent of God. The evangelist had said, concerning Jesus Christ, that he was with God, and that he was God; but here concerning John, that he was a man, a mere man; God is pleased to speak to us by men like ourselves. John was a great man, but he was a man, a son of man, he was sent from God, he was God's messenger, so he is called, Mal. iii. 1. God gave him both his mission, and his message, both his credentials and his instructions. John wrought no miracle, nor do we find that he had visions and revelations, but the strictness and purity of his life and doctrine, and the direct tendency of both to reform the world, and to revive the interests of God's kingdom of men, were plain indications that he was sent of God.

2. We are here told what his office and business was, ver. 7. The same came for a witness, an eye-witness, a leading witness. He came, εἰς μαρτυρίαν, for a testimony. The legal institutions had been long a testimony for God in the Jewish church, by them revealed religion was kept up; hence we read of the tabernacle of the testimony, the ark of the testimony, the law and the testimony; but now divine revelation is to be turned into another channel; now the testimony of Christ is the testimony of God, 1 Cor. i. 6. and ii. 1. Among the Gentiles God indeed had not left himself without witness, Acts xiv. 17. but the Redeemer had no testimonies born him among them. There was a profound silence concerning him, till John Baptist came for a witness to him. Now observe,

(1.) The matter of his testimony, he came to bear witness of the light. Light is a thing which witnesseth for itself, and carries its own evidence along with it: But to those who shut their

eyes against the light, it is necessary there should be those that bear witness to it. Christ's light needs not man's testimony, but the world's darkness doth. John was like the night watchman that goes round the town, proclaiming the approach of the morning light to those that have closed their eyes, and are not willing themselves to observe it; or like that watchman that was set to tell those who asked what of the night, that the morning comes, and if ye will enquire, enquire ye, Isa. xxi. 11, 12. He was sent of God to tell the world that the long looked for Messiah was now come, who should be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel; and that dispensation at hand which would bring life and immortality to light.

(2.) The design of his testimony: That all men through him might believe; not in him, but in Christ, whose way he was sent to prepare. He taught men to look through him, and pass through him to Christ; through the doctrine of repentance for sin, to that of faith in Christ. He prepared men for the reception and entertainment of Christ and his gospel, by awakening them to a sight and sense of sin, and their eyes being thereby opened, they might be ready to admit those beams of divine light, which in the person and doctrine of the Messiah were now ready to shine in their faces. If they would but receive this witness of man, they would soon find that the witness of God was greater, 1 John v. 9. See John x. 41. Observe, It was designed that all men through him might believe, excluding none from the kind and beneficial influences of his ministry that did not exclude themselves, as multitudes did who rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and so received the grace of God in vain.

3. We are here cautioned not to mistake him for the light, who only came to bear witness to it, ver. 8. He was not that light that was expected and promised, but only was sent to bear witness of that great and ruling light. He was a star, like that which guided the wise men to Christ: A morning star, but he was not the sun; not the bridegroom, but a friend of the bridegroom; not the prince, but his harbinger. There were those who rested in John's baptism, and looked no further, as those Ephesians, Acts xix. 3. To rectify whose mistake, the evangelist here, when he speaks very honourably of him, yet shews that he must veil to Christ. He was great as the prophet of the Highest, but not the Highest himself. Note, We must take heed of over-valuing ministers, as well as of under-valuing them; they are not our lords, nor have they dominion over our faith, but ministers by whom we believe; stewards of our Lord's house. We must not give up ourselves by an implicit faith to their conduct, for they are not that light; but we must attend to, and receive their testimony, for they are sent to bear witness of that light; so then let us esteem of them, and not otherwise. Had John pretended to be that light, he had not been so much as a faithful witness of that light. Those who usurp the honour of Christ, forfeit the honour of being the servants of Christ: Yet John was very serviceable as a witness to the light, though he was not that light. Those may be of great use to us, who yet shine with a borrowed light.

Secondly, Before he goes on with John's testimony, he returns to give us a further account of this Jesus to whom John bore record. Having shewed in the beginning of the chapter the glories of his Godhead, he here comes to shew the graces of his incarnation, and his favours to man as mediator.

(1.) Christ was the true light, ver. 9. not as if John Baptist were a false light, but in comparison with Christ he was a very small light: Christ is that great light that deserves to be called so. Other lights are but figuratively and equivocally called so; Christ is the true light. The fountain of all knowledge and of all comfort must needs be the true light. He is the true light, and for proof of it he doth not refer us to the emanations of his glory in the invisible world, the beams with which he enlightens that, but to those rays of his light which are darted downwards, and with which this dark world of ours is enlightened. But how doth Christ lighten every man that comes into the world?

(1.) By his creating power he lightens every man with the light of reason; that life which is the light of men is from him; all the discoveries and directions of reason, all the comfort it gives us, and all the beauty it puts upon us, is from Christ.

(2.) By the publication of his gospel to all nations, he doth in effect lighten every man. John Baptist was a light, but he enlightened only Jerusalem and Judea, and the region round about Jordan, like a candle that enlightens one room; but Christ is the true light, for he is a light to lighten the Gentiles. His everlasting gospel is to be preached to every nation and language, Rev. xiv. 6. Like the sun which lightens every man that will open his eyes and receive its light, Psal. xix. 6. to which the preaching of the gospel is compared, Rom. x. 18. Divine revelation is not now to be confined as it had been, to one people, but to be diffused to all people, Matt. v. 15.

(3.) By the operation of his Spirit and grace he lighteth all those that are enlightened to salvation: And those that are not enlightened by him, perish in darkness. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is said to be in the face of Jesus Christ, and is compared with that light which was at the beginning commanded



commanded to shine out of darkness, and which lighteth every man that comes into the world. Whatever light any man has, he is indebted to Christ for it, whether it be natural or supernatural.

2. Christ was in the world, ver. 10. He was in the world as the essential word before his incarnation, upholding all things; but this speaks of his being in the world when he took our nature upon him, and dwelt among us; see *John* xvi. 28. *I am come into the world.* The Son of the Highest was here in this lower world; that light in this dark world; that holy thing in this sinful polluted world. He left a world of bliss and glory, and was here in this melancholy, miserable world. He undertook to reconcile the world to God, and therefore was in the world to treat about it, and settle that affair; to satisfy God's justice for the world, and discover God's favour to the world. He was in the world, but not of it, and speaks with an air of triumph, when he can say, *Now I am no more in it*, *John* xvii.

11. The greatest honour that ever was put upon this world, which is so mean and inconsiderable a part of the universe, was, that the Son of God was once in the world; and as it should engage our affections to things above, that there Christ is, so it should reconcile us to our present abode in this world, that once Christ was here: He was in the world for a while, but it is spoken of as a thing past; and so it will be said of us shortly, *we were in the world*; Oh, that when we are here no more, we may be where Christ is! Now observe here,

(1.) What reason Christ had to expect the most affectionate and respectful welcome possible into this world, for the world was made by him. Therefore he came to save a lost world, because it was a world of his own making. Why should not he concern himself to receive the light that was of his own kindling, to restore a life of his own infusing, and to renew the image that was originally of his own impressing. The world was made by him, and therefore ought to do him homage.

(2.) What cold entertainment he met with notwithstanding: *The world knew him not.* The great Maker, Ruler, and Redeemer of the world was in it, and few or none of the inhabitants of the world were aware of it. The ox knows his owner, but the more brutish world did not; they did not own him, did not bid him welcome, because they did not know him; and they did not know him, because he did not make himself known in that way that they expected, in external glory and majesty: His kingdom came not with observation, because it was to be a kingdom of trial and probation. When he shall come as a judge the world shall know him.

3. He came to his own, ver. 11. not only to the world, which was his own, but to the people of Israel, that were peculiarly his own above all people; of them he came, among them he lived, and to them he was first sent. The Jews were at this time a mean, despicable people; the crown was fallen from their head, yet in remembrance of the ancient covenant, as bad as they were, and as poor as they were, Christ was not ashamed to look upon them as his own. *Tà idia*, his own things; not *τὰς ιδίας*, his own persons, as true believers are called, *John* xiii. 1. The Jews were his, as a man's house and lands, and goods, are his, which he useth and possesseth; but believers are his, as a man's wife and children are his own, which he loves and enjoys. He came to his own to seek and save them, because they were his own. He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, for it was he whose own the sheep were. Now observe,

1. That the generality rejected him; *His own received him not.* He had reason to expect that those who were his own should have bidden him welcome, considering how great the obligations were which they lay under to him; and how fair the opportunities were which they had of coming to the knowledge of him. They had the oracles of God, which told them before-hand when and where to expect him, and of what tribe and family he should arise. He came among them himself, introduced with signs and wonders, and himself the greatest; and therefore it is not said of them as it was of the world, ver. 10. that they knew him not; but *his own*, though they could not but know him, yet they received him not; did not receive his doctrine, did not welcome him as the Messiah, but fortified themselves against him. The chief priests, that were in a particular manner his own, for the Levites were God's tribe, were ring-leaders in this contempt put upon him: Now this was very unjust, because they were his own, and therefore he might command their respects, and it was very unkind and ungrateful, because he came to them to seek and save them, and so court their respects. Note, Many who in profession are Christ's own, yet do not receive him, because they will not part with their sins, nor have him to reign over them.

2. That yet there was a remnant who owned him, and were faithful to him. Though his own received him not, yet there were those that received him, ver. 12. *But as many as received him: Though Israel were not gathered, yet Christ was glorious.* Though the body of that nation persisted and perished in unbelief, yet there were many of them that were wrought upon to submit to Christ, and many more that were not of that fold. Observe here,

The true Christian's description and property: And that is, that he receives Christ, and believes on his name; the latter explains the former. Note, (1.) To be a Christian indeed, is to No. xciii.

believe on Christ's name: It is to assent to the gospel discovery, and consent to the gospel proposal concerning him. His name is the Word of God; the King of kings; the Lord our righteousness; Jesus, a Saviour. Now, to believe on his name, is to acknowledge that he is what these great names speak him, and to acquiesce in it that he be so to us. (2.) Believing in Christ's name is receiving him as a gift from God. We must receive his doctrine as true and good; receive his law as just and holy; receive his offers as kind and advantageous; and we must receive the image of his grace, and impressions of his love, as the governing principle of our affections and actions.

2. The true Christians dignity and privilege are twofold.

1. The privilege of adoption, which takes them into the number of God's children; to them gave he power to become the sons of God. Hitherto the adoption pertained to the Jews only: *Israel is my son, my first-born*; but now by faith in Christ, Gentiles are the children of God, *Gal.* iii. 26. They have power, ἐξουσίαν, authority; for no man taketh this power to himself, but who is authorized by the gospel charter. To them gave he a right; to them gave he this preeminence. *This power have all the saints.* Note, (1.) It is the unspeakable privilege of all good Christians, that they are become the children of God. They were by nature children of wrath; children of this world. If they be the children of God, they become so, are made so. *Fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani.* Tertul. Behold what manner of love is this, 1 *John* iii. 1. God calls them his children, they call him Father, and are entitled to all the privileges of children; those of their way, and those of their home. (2.) The privilege of adoption is entirely owing to Jesus Christ; he gave this power to them that believe on his name. God is his Father, and so ours; and it is by virtue of our espousals to him, and union with him, that we stand related to God as a father. It was in Christ that we were predestinated to the adoption; from him we receive both the character and the Spirit of adoption, and he is the first-born among many brethren. The Son of God became a Son of man, that the sons and daughters of men might become the sons and daughters of God Almighty.

2. The privilege of regeneration, ver. 13. which were born. Note, All the children of God are born again; all that are adopted are regenerated: This real change evermore attends that relative one. Wherever God confers the dignity of children, he creates the nature and disposition of children: Men cannot do so when they adopt. Now here we have an account of the original of this new birth. 1. Negatively. (1.) It is not propagated by natural generation from our parents. It is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of corruptible seed, 1 *Pet.* i. 23. Man is called flesh and blood, because thence he has his original; but we do not become the children of God, as we become the children of our natural parents. Note, Grace doth not run in a blood, as corruption doth. Man polluted begat a son in his own likeness, *Gen.* v. 3. But man sanctified and renewed doth not beget a son in that likeness. The Jews gloried much in their parentage, and the noble blood that ran in their veins; we are Abraham's seed, and therefore to them pertained the adoption, because they were born of that blood; but this New Testament adoption is not founded in any such natural relation. (2.) It is not produced by the natural power of our own will. As it is not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, so neither is it of the will of man; that labours under a moral impotency of determining itself to that which is good; so that the principles of the divine life are not of our own planting, it is the grace of God that makes us willing to be his. Nor can human laws or writings prevail to sanctify and regenerate a soul; if they could, the new birth would be by the will of man. But, 2. Positively, it is of God. This new birth is owing to the word of God as the means, 1 *Pet.* i. 23. and to the Spirit of God as the great and sole author. True believers are born of God, 1 *John* iii. 9. and v. 1. And this is necessary to their adoption; for we cannot expect the love of God, if we have not something of his likeness, nor claim the privileges of adoption, if we be not under the power of regeneration.

4. The word was made flesh, ver. 14. This expresseth Christ's incarnation more closely than those before. By his divine presence he always was in the world, and by his prophets he came to his own. But now the fulness of time was come, he was sent forth after another manner, made of a woman, *Gal.* iv. 4. God manifested in the flesh, according to the faith and hope of holy Job, chap. xix. 26. *Yet shall I see God in my flesh.* Observe here,

1. The human nature of Christ with which he was veiled; and that expressed two ways.

(1.) The Word was made flesh. Forasmuch as the children, who were to become the sons of God, were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, *Heb.* ii. 14. The Socinians agree that Christ is both God and man, but they say, he was man, and was made God, as Moses, *Exod.* vii. 1. directly contrary to John here, who saith, Θεὸς ἦν, He was God, but σαρκὶ ἐγένετο, he was made flesh. Compare ver. 1. with this. This speaks not only that he was really and truly man, but that he subjected himself to the miseries and calamities of the human nature. He was made flesh, the meanest part of man; flesh



flesh speaks man *weak*, and he was crucified through *weakness*, 2 Cor. xiii. 4. *Flesh* speaks man *mortal* and *dying*, Psal. lxxviii. 39. and Christ was *put to death in the flesh*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. Nay, *flesh* speaks man *tainted with sin*, Gen. vi. 3. And Christ though he was perfectly holy and harmless, yet appeared *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, Rom. viii. 3. and was made *sin for us*, 2 Cor. v. 6. When Adam had sinned, God said to him, *Dust thou art*, not only because made out of the dust, but because by sin he was sunk into dust: His fall did, *συνάβην τὴν ἄχνην*, turn him as it were *all into body*, made him earthly: therefore he that was made a curse for us, was made *flesh*, and condemned sin in the flesh, Rom. viii. 3. Wonder at this, that the eternal Word should be made flesh, when flesh was come into such an ill name; that he who made *all things*, should himself be made flesh, one of the meanest things, and submit to that from which he was at the greatest distance. The voice that ushered in the gospel, cried, *All flesh is grass*, Isa. xl. 1. to make the Redeemer's love the more wonderful, who to *redeem* and *save* us was made flesh, and withered as grass; but the *Word of the Lord*, who was made flesh, endures for ever; when made flesh he ceased not to be the Word of God.

(2.) He *dwelt among us*, here in this lower world. Having taken upon him the nature of man, he put himself into the place and condition of other men. The Word might have been made flesh and dwelt among the angels, but having taken a *body* of the same mould with us, in it he came and resided in the same world with us. He *dwelt among us*, us worms of the earth, us that he had no need of, us that he got nothing by; us that were *corrupt*, and *depraved*; and revolted from God. The Lord God came and dwelt even *among the rebellious*, Psal. lxviii. 18. He that had dwelt among angels, those noble and excellent beings, came and dwelt *among us* that are a *generation of vipers*; us *sinners*, which was worse to him than David's dwelling in Mesech and Kedar; or Ezekiel's dwelling *among scorpions*; or the church of Pergamus dwelling *where Satan's seat is*. When we look upon the upper world, the world of spirits, how mean and contemptible doth this flesh, this body appear which we carry about with us, and this world in which our lot is cast; and how hard is it to a contemplative mind to be reconciled to them. But that the eternal Word was *made flesh*, was clothed with a body as we are, and dwelt in this world as we do; this has put an honour upon them both, and should make us willing to abide in the flesh while God has any work for us to do, for Christ dwelt in this lower world, as bad as it is, till he had finished what he had to do there, John xvii. 4. He *dwelt among us* Jews, that the scripture might be fulfilled, *He shall dwell in the tents of Shem*, Gen. ix. 27. And see Zech. ii. 10. Though the Jews were unkind to him, yet he continued to dwell among them; though (as some of the ancient writers tell us) he was invited to better treatment by Abgarus, king of Edessa, yet he removed not to any other nation.

He *dwelt among us*. He was in the world not as a way-faring man that tarries but for a night, but he *dwelt among us*, made a long residence; the original word is observable, *ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν*, He dwelt among us, he dwelt *as in a tabernacle*; which intimates, (1.) That he dwelt here in very *mean* circumstances, as shepherds that dwell in tents. He did not dwell among us *as in a palace*, but as in a *tent*; for he had not where to lay his head, and was always upon the remove. (2.) That his state here was a *military* state; soldiers *dwell in tents*, he had long since proclaimed war with the *seed of the serpent*, and now he takes *the field* in person; sets up his standard, and pitcheth his tent to prosecute this war. (3.) That his stay among us was not to be perpetual. He dwelt here *as in a tent*, not as at *home*. The patriarchs, by dwelling in tabernacles, *confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth*, and sought the better country, and so did Christ, leaving us an example, Heb. xiii. 13, 14. (4.) That as of old God dwelt in the tabernacle of Moses, by the Shechinah between the cherubims; so now he dwells in the human nature of Christ, that is now the true Shechinah, the symbol of God's peculiar presence: And we are to make all our addresses to God through Christ, and from him to receive divine oracles.

2. The *beams of his divine glory* that darted through this *veil of flesh*. We beheld his glory, the glory *as of the only begotten of the Father*, full of *grace and truth*. The sun is still the fountain of light, though eclipsed or clouded; so Christ was still the brightness of his Father's glory, even then when he *dwelt among us* in this lower world. And how slightly soever the Jews thought of him, there were those that saw through the veil. Observe,

1. Who were the witnesses of this glory. *We*, his disciples and followers that conversed most freely and familiarly with him; we among whom he *dwelt*. Other men discover their weaknesses to those that are most familiar with them, but it was not so with Christ; those that were most intimate with him, saw most of his glory. As it was with his *doctrine*, the disciples knew the mysteries of it, while others had it *under the veil of parables*; so it was with his *person*, they saw the glory of his divinity, while others saw only the veil of his human nature. He manifested himself *to them*, and *not unto the world*. These witnesses were a competent number, twelve of them, a whole jury of witnesses;

men of plainness and integrity, and far from any thing of design or intrigue.

2. What evidence they had of it; we *saw it*. They had not their evidence by report, at second hand, but were themselves eye-witnesses of those proofs, on which they built their testimony that he was the *Son of the living God*. We *saw it*. The word signifies a fixed abiding sight, such as gave them an opportunity of making their observations. This apostle himself explains this, *what we declare unto you of the word of life*, is what we have *seen with our eyes*, and what we have looked upon, 1 John i. 1.

3. What the glory was; *the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*. The glory of the *Word made flesh* was such a glory as became the only *begotten Son of God*, and could not be the glory of any other. Note, (1.) Jesus Christ is the only begotten of the Father: believers are the children of God by the special favour of adoption, and the special grace of regeneration; they are in a sense *ὁμοῖοι*, of a like nature, 1 Pet. i. 4. and have the image of his perfections; but Christ is *ὁμοῖος*, of the same nature, and is the express image of his person, and the Son of God by an eternal generation. Angels are sons of God, but he never said to any of them, *This day have I begotten thee*, Heb. i. 5. (2.) He was evidently declared to be the only begotten of the Father, by that which was seen of his glory, when he dwelt among us. Though he was in the *form of a servant* in respect of outward circumstances, yet in respect of graces his form was as that of the *fourth* in the fiery furnace, *like the Son of God*. His divine glory appeared in the holiness and heavenliness of his doctrine; in his miracles, which extorted from many this acknowledgment, that he was the *Son of God*; it appeared in the purity and goodness, and beneficence of his whole conversation; God's goodness is his glory, and he went about doing good: He spoke and acted in every thing as an incarnate deity. Perhaps the evangelist has a particular regard to the glory of his *transfiguration*, which he was an eye-witness of; see 2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18. God's calling him his *beloved Son in whom he was well pleased*, spoke him the *only begotten of the Father*; but the full proof of this was at his resurrection.

4. What advantage those he dwelt among had from this. He dwelt among them full of *grace and truth*. In the old tabernacle wherein God dwelt was the *law*, in this was *grace*; in that were *types*, in this was *truth*. The incarnate Word was every way qualified for his undertaking as Mediator, for he was *full of grace and truth*, the two great things that fallen man stands in need of; and this proved him to be the *Son of God* as much as the divine power and majesty that appeared in him. (1.) He has a fulness of *grace and truth for himself*; he had the Spirit without measure. He was *full of grace*, i. e. fully acceptable to his Father, and therefore qualified to intercede for us; and *full of truth*, i. e. fully apprised of those things he was to reveal, and therefore fit to instruct us. He had a fulness of knowledge and a fulness of compassion. (2.) He has a fulness of *grace and truth for us*. He *received* that he might *give*, and God was well pleased in him, that he might be well pleased with us in him; and this was the *truth* of the legal *types*.

15. ¶ John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me, is preferred before me; for he was before me. 16. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. 17. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. 18. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

In these verses,

First, The evangelist begins again to give us John Baptist's testimony concerning Christ, ver. 15. He had said, ver. 8. that he *came for a witness*, now here he tells us that he did accordingly *bear witness*.

Here, 1. Observe, *How he expressed* his testimony, he *cried*, according to the prediction, that he should be *the voice of one crying*. The Old Testament prophets cried aloud to shew people their *sins*, this New Testament prophet cried aloud to shew people their *Saviour*. This intimates, (1.) That it was an open, *publick* testimony proclaimed, that all manner of persons might take notice of it, for all are concerned in it. False teachers *entice secretly*, but wisdom publisheth her dictates in the chief places of concourse. (2.) That he was free and hearty in bearing this testimony. He *cried* as one that was both *well assured* of, and *well affected* to the truth he witnessed of. He that had leaped in his *mother's womb* for joy of Christ's approach when newly conceived, doth now with a like exultation of spirit *welcome* his publick appearance.

2. What his *testimony* was. He appeals to what he had said at the beginning of his ministry, when he had directed them to expect one that should *come after him*, whose fore-runner he was, and never intended any other but to lead them to him, and to prepare his way. This he had given them notice of from the first.



first. Note, It is very comfortable to a minister to have the testimony of his conscience for him, that he set out in his ministry with honest principles, and sincere intentions, with a single eye to the glory and honour of Christ. Now what he had then said, he applies to this Jesus whom he had lately baptized, and who was so remarkably owned from heaven: *This was he of whom I spake.* John did not tell them there would shortly appear such a one among them, and then leave them to find him out, but in this he went beyond all the Old Testament prophets, that he particularly specified the person, *this was he*; that is the very man I told you of, and to him all I said is to be accommodated. Now, what was it he said,

1. He had given the preference to this Jesus: *He that comes after me is preferred before me.* In the time of his birth and publick appearance, that *succeeds* me in preaching, and making disciples, yet is a more excellent person upon all accounts; as the prince or peer that *comes after*, is preferred before the har-binger or gentleman-usher that makes way for him. Note, Jesus Christ, who was to be called the *Son of the Highest*, Luke i. 32. was preferred before John Baptist, who was to be called only the *prophet of the Highest*, Luke i. 76. John was a minister of the New Testament, but Christ was the Mediator of the New Testament. And observe, though John was a great man, and had a great name and interest, yet he was forward to give the preference to him to whom it belonged. Note, All the ministers of Christ must prefer him and his interest, before themselves and all their own interests: they will make an ill account, *that seek their own things, not the things of Christ*, Phil. ii. 21. He comes after me, and yet is preferred before me. Note, God dispenseth his gifts according to his good pleasure, and many times crosseth hands as Jacob did, preferring the younger before the elder. Paul far out stripped those that were in Christ before him.

2. He here gives a good reason for it, *for he was before me*, *πρώτος μὲν ἔγωγε*. He was my first, or, first to me; he was my first cause, my original. The first is one of God's names, Isa. xlv. 6. He is before me, is my first, (1.) In respect of seniority, he was before me, for he was before Abraham, John viii. 58. Nay, he was before all things, Col. i. 17. I but of yesterday, he from eternity. It was but in those days that John Baptist came, Matt. iii. 1. but the goings forth of our Lord Jesus, were of old, from everlasting, Mic. v. 2. This proves two natures in Christ; Christ as man came after John as to his publick appearance, Christ as God was before him; and how could he otherwise be before him, but by an external existence? (2.) In respect of supremacy, for he was my prince; so some princes are called the first; *πρώτον*: It is for whose sake and service I am sent: he is my Master, I am his minister and messenger.

Secondly, He presently returns again to speak of Jesus Christ, and cannot go on with John Baptist's testimony till ver. 19. The 16th verse has a manifest connexion with ver. 14. where the incarnate Word was said to be full of grace and truth. Now here he makes this not only the matter of our adoration, but of our thankfulness, because from that fulness of his we all have received. He received gifts for men, Psal. lxxviii. 18. that he might give gifts to men, Eph. iv. 8. He was filled that he might fill all in all, Eph. i. 23. might fill our treasures, Prov. viii. 21. He has a fountain of fulness overflowing. We all have received. All we apostles, so some. We have received the favour of this apostle-ship, that is grace; and a fitness for it, that is truth; or rather, All we believers, as many as received him, ver. 17. received from him. Note, All true believers receive from Christ's fulness; the best and greatest saints cannot live without him, the meanest and weakest may live by him. This excludes proud boasting, that we have nothing but we have received it; and silenceth perplexing fears, that we want nothing but we may receive it.

Let us see what it is that we have received.

1. We have received grace for grace. Our receivings by Christ are all summed up in this one word, grace; we have received, *χάριν, even grace*, so great a gift, so rich, so invaluable; we have received no less than grace; that is a gift to be spoken of with an emphasis. It is repeated, *grace for grace*; for to every stone in this building, as well as to the top stone, we must cry, Grace, grace. Observe,

1. The blessing received; it is grace; the good will of God towards us, and the good work of God in us. God's good will works the good work, and then the good work qualifies us for further tokens of his good will. As the cistern receives water from the fulness of the fountain, the branches sap from the fulness of the root, and the air light from the fulness of the sun, so we receive grace from the fulness of Christ.

2. The manner of its reception; *grace for grace*, *χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος*. The phrase is singular, and interpreters put different senses upon it, each of which will be of use to illustrate the unsearchable riches of the grace of Christ. Grace for grace speaks,

1. The freeness of this grace; it is grace for grace sake; so Grotius. We receive grace not for our sakes, be it known to us, but even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy sight. It is a gift according to grace, Rom. xii. 6. It is grace to us for the sake of grace to Jesus Christ. God was well pleased in him, and is therefore well pleased with us in him, Eph. i. 6.

2. The fulness of this grace. Grace for grace is abundance of grace, grace upon grace; so Camero, one grace heaped upon another; as *skin for skin*, is skin after skin, even all that a man has, Job ii. 4. It is a blessing poured out that there shall not be room to receive it, *plenteous redemption*. One grace a pledge of more grace. Joseph, he will add. It is such a fulness, as is called the fulness of God, which we are filled with. We are not straitened in the grace of Christ, if we be not straitened in our own bosoms.

3. The serviceableness of this grace, grace for grace, is grace for the promoting and advancing of grace. Grace to be exercised by ourselves, gracious habits for gracious acts; grace to be ministered to others, gracious vouchsafements for gracious performances, grace is a talent to be traded with. The apostles received grace, Rom. i. 5. Eph. iii. 8. that they might communicate it, 1 Pet. iv. 10.

4. The substitution of New Testament grace, in the room and stead of Old Testament grace; so Beza. And this sense is confirmed by what follows, ver. 17. for the Old Testament had grace in type; the New Testament has grace in truth. There was a grace under the Old Testament, the gospel was preached then, Gal. iii. 8. but that grace is superseded, and we have gospel grace instead of it, a glory which excelleth, 2 Cor. iii. 10. Discoveries of grace are now more clear, distributions of grace far more plentiful; this is grace instead of grace.

5. It speaks the augmentation and continuance of grace; grace for grace is one grace, to improve, confirm, and perfect another grace. We are changed into the divine image, from glory to glory, from one degree of glorious grace to another, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Those that have true grace, have that for more grace, Jam. iv. 6. when God gives grace, he saith, Take this in part, for he which hath promised will perform.

6. It speaks the agreeableness and conformity of grace in the saints, to the grace that is in Jesus Christ. So Mr. Clerk. Grace for grace is grace in us answering to grace in him, as the impression upon the wax answers the seal, line for line. The grace we receive from Christ, *changeth us into the same image*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. the image of the Son, Rom. viii. 29. the image of the heavenly, 1 Cor. xv. 49.

2. We have received grace and truth, ver. 17. He had said, ver. 14. That Christ was full of grace and truth; now here he saith, that by him grace and truth come to us. From Christ we receive grace; this is a string he delights to harp upon, he cannot go off from it. Two things he further observes in this verse concerning this grace.

(1.) Its preference above the law of Moses. The law was given by Moses, and it was a glorious discovery, both of God's will concerning man, and his good will to man; but the gospel of Christ is a much clearer discovery, both of duty and happiness. That which was given by Moses, was purely, terrifying and threatening, and bound with penalties, a law which could not give life, which was given with abundance of terror, Heb. xii. 18. But that which is given by Jesus Christ is of another nature, it has all the beneficial uses of the law, but not the terror, for it is grace. Grace teaching, Tit. ii. 11. Grace reigning, Rom. v. 21. It is a law, but a remedial law. The endearments of love are the genius of the gospel, not the affrightments of law and the curse.

(2.) Its connexion with truth; *grace and truth*. In the gospel we have the discovery of the greatest truths, to be embraced by the understanding, as well as of the richest grace, to be embraced by the will and affections. It is a faithful saying; and worthy of all acceptance, i. e. it is grace and truth. The offers of grace are sincere, and what we may venture our souls upon; they are made in earnest, for it is grace and truth. It is grace and truth, with reference to the law that was given by Moses. For it is, (1.) The performance of all the Old Testament promises. In the Old Testament we often find mercy and truth put together, i. e. Mercy according to promise; so here, grace and truth is grace according to promise. See Luke i. 72. 1 Kings viii. 56. (2.) It is the substance of all the Old Testament types and shadows. Something of grace there was both in the ordinances that were instituted for Israel, and the providences that were concerning Israel; but they were only shadows of good things to come, even of that grace that is to be brought to us by the revelation of Jesus Christ. He is the true paschal lamb, the true scape-goat, the true manna, &c. They had grace in the picture, we have grace in the person, that is grace and truth. Grace and truth came, ἐγένετο, was made; the same word that was used, ver. 3. concerning Christ's making all things. The law was only made known by Moses, but the being of this grace and truth, as well as the discovery of it, is owing to Jesus Christ; this was made by him, as the world at first was; and by him this grace and truth do consist.

3. Another thing we receive from Christ is, a clear revelation of God to us, ver. 18. He hath declared God to us, whom no man hath seen at any time. This was the grace and truth which came by Christ, the knowledge of God and an acquaintance with him. Observe,

1. The insufficiency of all other discoveries, No man hath seen God at any time. This speaks, (1.) That the nature of God being spiritual,



spiritual, he is invisible to bodily eyes, he is a being *whom no man hath seen or can see*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. we have therefore need to *live by faith*, by which we *see him that is invisible*, Heb. xi. 27. (2.) That the revelation which God made of himself in the Old Testament, was very short, and imperfect, in comparison with that which he has made by Christ; *No man hath seen God at any time*, i. e. what was seen and known of God before the incarnation of Christ, was nothing to that which is now seen and known; life and immortality are now brought to a much clearer light than they were then. (3.) That none of the Old Testament prophets were so well qualified to make known the mind and will of God to the children of men as our Lord Jesus was, for none of them had *seen God at any time*; *Moses beheld the similitude of the Lord*, Numb. xii. 8. but was told he could not *see his face*, Exod. xxxiii. 20. But this recommends Christ's holy religion to us, that it was founded by one that had seen God, and knew more of his mind than any one else ever did, for he had *seen him*, which they never did.

2. The all-sufficiency of the gospel-discovery, proved from its author, *the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him*. Observe here,

1. How fit he was to make this discovery, and every way qualified for it. He, and none but he, was *worthy to take the book and open the seals*, Rev. v. 9. For, (1.) He is *the only begotten Son*, and who so likely to know the Father as the Son; or, in whom is the Father better known than in the Son, *Matth. xi. 27*. He is of the same nature with the Father, so that he who hath *seen him* hath seen *the Father*, John xiv. 9. The servant is not supposed to know so well *what his Lord doth*, as the son, *John xv. 15*. Moses was *faithful as a servant*, but Christ *as a son*. (2.) He is *in the bosom of the Father*. He had lain in his bosom from eternity; when he was here upon earth, yet still, as God, he was in the bosom of the Father, and thither he returned when he *ascended*. *In the bosom of the Father*, i. e. 1. In the bosom of his *special love*, dear to him, in *whom he was well-pleased*, always his delight. All God's saints are *in his hand*, but his Son was *in his bosom*, one in nature and essence, and therefore, in the highest degree, one *in love*. 2. In the bosom of his *secret counsels*. As there was a mutual complacency, so there was a mutual consciousness between the Father and Son, *Matth. xi. 27*. none so fit as he to make known to God, for none knew his mind so as he did. Our most secret counsels we are said to hide *in our bosom* (in *petto*) Christ was privy to the *bosom-counsels* of the Father. The prophets *sat down at his feet* as scholars, Christ lay in his bosom as a friend. See *Eph. iii. 11*.

2. How free he was in making this discovery; *he hath declared*; him is not in the original. He has declared that of God, which no man had at any time seen or known; not only that which was hid of God, but that which was hid in God, *Eph. iii. 9*. ἐξήνοιχεν, it signifies a plain, clear, and full discovery, not by general and doubtful hints, but by particular explications: He that runs may now read the will of God, and the way of salvation. This is the *grace*, this the *truth* that came by Jesus Christ.

19. ¶ And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him, *Who art thou?* 20. And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, *I am not the Christ*. 21. And they asked him, *What then? Art thou Elias?* And he saith, *I am not*. *Art thou that prophet?* And he answered, *No*. 22. Then said they unto him, *Who art thou?* that we may give an answer to them that sent us: what sayest thou of thyself? 23. He said, *I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord*, as said the prophet Esaias. 24. And they which were sent, were of the Pharisees. 25. And they asked him, and said unto him, *Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?* 26. John answered them, saying, *I baptize with water*: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; 27. He it is who coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. 28. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

We have here the testimony of John, which he delivered to the messengers, which were sent from Jerusalem to examine him. Observe here,

First, Who they were that sent to him, and who they were that were sent.

1. They that sent to him were *the Jews at Jerusalem*; the great Sanhedrin, or High-commission-court, which sat at Jerusalem, and was the representative of the Jewish church, who took cognizance of all matters relating to religion. One would think, they that were the fountains of learning, and the guides of the church, should have, by books, understood the times so well, as to know

that the Messiah was at hand, and therefore should presently have known him that was his fore-runner, and readily embraced him; but instead of that, they sent messengers to *cross questions* with him. Secular learning, honour, and power seldom dispose mens minds to the reception of divine light.

2. They that were sent, were, (1.) *Priests and Levites*, probably members of the council; men of learning, gravity, and authority; John Baptist was himself a priest, of the seed of Aaron, and therefore it was not fit he should be examined by any but priests. It was prophesied concerning John's ministry, that it should *purify the sons of Levi*, Mal. iii. 3. and therefore they were jealous of him and his reformation. (2.) They were *of the Pharisees*, proud, self-justitaries, that thought they needed no repentance; and therefore could not bear one that made it his business to preach repentance.

Secondly, On what errand they went; it was to enquire concerning John and *his baptism*. They did not send for John up to them, probably because they *feared the people*, lest the people, where John was, should be provoked to rise, or lest the people, where they were, should be brought acquainted with him; they thought it was good keeping him at a distance.

They enquire concerning him. (1.) To satisfy their curiosity; as the Athenians enquired concerning Paul's doctrine, for the novelty of it, *Acts xvii. 19, 20*. Such a proud conceit they had of themselves, that the doctrine of repentance was to them strange doctrine. (2.) It was to shew their authority. They thought they *looked great*, when they called him to account, whom all men counted as a prophet, and arraigned him at their bar. (3.) It was with a design to *suppress him*, and silence him if they could find any colour of it, for they were jealous of his growing interest; and his ministry agreed neither with the Mosaic dispensation, which they had been long under, nor with the notions they had formed of the Messiah's kingdom.

Thirdly, What was the answer he gave them, and his account, both concerning himself and concerning his baptism, in both which he witnessed to Christ.

1. Concerning himself, and what he professed himself to be. They asked him, *Σὺ τίς εἶ*; Thou, *Who art thou?* John's appearing in the world was surprising; he was in the wilderness till the day of his shewing unto Israel; his spirit, his converse, his doctrine had something in them which commanded, and gained respect; but he did not, as seducers do, give out himself to be *some great one*. He was more industrious to *do good* than to *appear great*; and therefore waved saying any thing of himself, till he was legally interrogated. Those speak best for Christ, that say least of themselves, whose *own works* praise them, not *their own lips*.

He answers their interrogatory.

1. *Negatively*. He was not that great one, whom some took him to be. God's faithful witnesses stand more upon their guard, *against undue respects*, than against *unjust contempts*. Paul writes as warmly against those that overvalued, and said, *I am of Paul*, as against those that undervalued him, and said, his bodily presence was weak, and rent his clothes when he was called a god.

1. John disowns himself to be *the Christ*, ver. 20. he said, *I am not the Christ*, who was now expected and waited for. Note, The ministers of Christ must remember that *they are not Christ*, and therefore must not usurp his powers and prerogatives, nor assume the praises due to him only. They are not Christ, and therefore must not lord it over God's heritage, nor pretend to a dominion over the faith of Christians. They cannot create grace and peace, they cannot enlighten, convert, quicken, comfort, for they are not Christ. Observe how emphatically this is here expressed concerning John. He *confessed and denied not, but confessed*; it notes his vehemence and constancy in making this protestation. Note, Temptations to pride, and assuming that honour to ourselves which doth not belong to us, ought to be resisted with a great deal of vigour and earnestness. When John was taken to be the Messiah, he did not connive at it with a *Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur*; but openly and solemnly without any ambiguities, confessed, *I am not the Christ*; ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ὁ Χριστός; *I am not the Christ, not I*; another is at hand who is, but I am not. His disowning himself to be the Christ, is called his *confessing*, and not *denying* Christ. Note, Those that humble and abase themselves, thereby confess Christ, and give honour to him; but those that will not deny themselves, do, in effect, deny Christ.

2. He disowns himself to be Elias, ver. 21. the Jews expected the person of Elias to return from heaven, and to live among them, and promised themselves great matters from it; and hearing of John's character, doctrine, and baptism, and observing that he appeared as one dropped from heaven, in the same part of the country from which Elijah was carried to heaven, it is no wonder that they were ready to take him for this Elijah; but he disowned this honour too. He was indeed prophesied of under the name of Elijah, *Mal. iv. 5*. and he came in the *spirit and power of Elias*, Luke i. 17. and was the Elias that was to come, *Matt. xi. 14*. but he was not the person of Elias; not that Elias that went to heaven in the fiery chariot, as he was that met Christ in his transfiguration: he was the Elias that God had promised, not the Elias that they foolishly dreamed of. Elias did come, and they *knew him not*, *Matt. xvii. 12*. nor did he make himself known to them



them as the Elias, because they had promised themselves such an Elias as God never promised them.

3. He disowns himself to be that *prophet*, or the prophet. (1.) He was not *that* prophet which Moses said, *the Lord would raise up to them, of their brethren*, like unto him. If they meant that, they needed not ask that question, for that prophet was no other than the Messiah, and he had said already, *I am not the Christ*. (2.) He was not such a prophet as they expected and wished for, who, like Samuel, and Elijah, and some other of the prophets, would interpose in publick affairs, and rescue them from under the Roman yoke. (3.) He was not one of the old prophets raised from the dead, as they expected one to come before Elias, as Elias before the Messiah. (4.) Though John was a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, yet he had his revelation not by dreams and visions, as the Old Testament prophets had theirs; his commission and work was of another nature, and belonged to another dispensation. If John had said that he was Elias, and was a prophet, he might have made his words good, but ministers must, upon all occasions, express themselves with the utmost caution, both, that they do not confirm people in any mistakes, and particularly, that they give not occasion to any, to think of them *above what is meet*.

2. *Affirmatively*. The committee that was sent to examine him, pressed for a positive answer, *ver. 22.* urging the authority of *them that sent them*, which they expected he should pay a deference to: Tell us, *What art thou?* Not that we may believe thee, and be baptized by thee, but that we may give an answer to them that sent us, and it may not be said that we were sent on a fool's errand: John was looked upon as a man of sincerity, and therefore they believed he would not give an evasive, ambiguous answer, but would be fair, and above-board, and give a plain answer to a plain question; *What sayest thou of thyself?* And he did so, *I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness*. Observe,

1. He gives his answer in the words of scripture, to shew that the scripture was fulfilled in him; and that his office was supported by a divine authority. What the scripture saith of the office of the ministry, should be often thought of by those of that high calling, who must look upon themselves as that, and that only, which the word of God makes them.

2. He gives in his answer in very humble, modest, self-denying expressions; he chuseth to apply that scripture to himself, which spoke not his dignity, but his duty and dependence, which speaks him little; *I am the voice*, as if he were, *Vox & præterea nihil*.

3. He gives such an account of himself as might be profitable to them, and might excite and awaken them to hearken to him, for he *was the voice*; see *Isa. xl. 3.* a voice to alarm; an articulate voice to instruct. Ministers are but the *voice*, the vehicle by which God is pleased to communicate his mind: What is Paul, and Apollos, but messengers? Observe,

1. He was a *human voice*. The people were prepared to receive the law by the voice of thunders, and a trumpet exceeding loud, such as made them tremble, but they were prepared for the gospel by the voice of a man like ourselves, *a still small voice*, such as that in which God came to Elijah, *1 Kings xix. 12.*

2. He was the voice of *one crying*; which notes, (1.) His earnestness and importunity in calling people to repentance; he *cried aloud and did not spare*. Ministers must preach as those that are in earnest, and are themselves affected with those things which they desire to affect others with. Those words are not likely to thaw the hearers hearts, that freeze between the speaker's lips. (2.) His open publication of the doctrine he preached; he was the voice of *one crying*, that all manner of persons might hear and take notice. *Doth not wisdom cry?* Prov. viii. 3.

3. It was in the *wilderness* that this voice was crying; in a place of silence and solitude, out of the noise of the world, and the hurry of its business; the more retired we are from the tumult of secular affairs, the better prepared we are to hear from God.

4. That which he cried, was, *Make straight the way of the Lord*; that is, (1.) He came to rectify the mistakes of people concerning the ways of God; it is certain they are right ways, but the scribes and Pharisees, with their corrupt glosses upon the law, had made them crooked: Now John Baptist calls people to return to the original rule. (2.) He came to prepare and dispose people for the reception and entertainment of Christ and his gospel. It is an allusion to the harbingers of a prince, or great man, that cry, *make room*. Note, When God is coming towards us, we must prepare to meet him, and let the word of the Lord have a free course: See *Psal. xxiv. 7.*

2. Here is his testimony concerning his baptism.

1. The enquiry which the committee made about it; *ver. 25.* *Why baptizest thou, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that prophet?* (1.) They readily apprehended baptism to be fitly and properly used as a sacred rite or ceremony, for the Jewish church had used it with circumcision in the admission of proselytes; to signify the cleansing of them from the pollutions of their former state: That sign was made use of in the Christian church, that it might be the more passable. Christ did not affect novelty, nor should his ministers. (2.) They expected it would be used in the days of the Messiah, because it was promised that then there should be a *fountain opened*, *Zech. xiii. 1.* and *clean water sprinkled*, No. xciii.

Ezek. xxxvi. 25. It is taken for granted that Christ, and Elias, and *that prophet*, would baptize, for they come to *purify* a *polluted world*. Divine justice drowned the old world *in its filth*, but divine grace has provided for the cleansing of this new world *from its filth*. (3.) They would therefore know by what authority John baptized. His denying himself to be Elias, or *that prophet*, subjected him to this further question, *Why baptizest thou?* Note, It is no new thing for a man's modesty to be turned against him, and improved to his prejudice; but it is better men should take advantage of our low thoughts of ourselves to *trample upon us*, than the devil take advantage of our high thoughts of ourselves, to tempt us to pride, and draw us into his condemnation.

2. The account he gave of it, *ver. 26, 27.*

1. He owned himself to be only the minister of the outward sign; *I baptize with water*, and that is all; I am no more, and do no more than what you see, I have no other title but John the Baptist; I cannot confer the spiritual grace signified by it. Paul was in care that none should think of him above what they saw him to be, *2 Cor. xii. 6.* so was John Baptist. Ministers must not set up for masters.

2. He directed them to one that was greater than himself, and would do that for them, if they pleased, which he could not do. *I baptize with water*, and that is the utmost of my commission; I have nothing to do, but by this to lead you to one that comes after me, and consign you to him. Note, The great business of Christ's ministers, is to direct all people to him; we preach not ourselves, but *Christ Jesus the Lord*. John gave the same account to this committee, that he had given to the people, *ver. 15.* *This was he of whom I spake*. John was constant and uniform in his testimony, not as a reed shaken with the wind. The Sanhedrin were jealous of his interest in the people, but he is not afraid to tell them, that there is one at the door that will go beyond him.

1. He tells them of Christ's presence among them, now at this time; there *stands one among you* at this time, *whom you know not*: Christ stood among the common people, and was as one of them. Note, 1. There is much true worth lies hid in this world: obscurity is often the lot of real excellency. Saints are God's *hidden ones*, therefore *the world knows them not*. 2. God himself is often nearer us than we are aware of: the *Lord is in this place*, and *I knew it not*. They were gazing in expectation of the Messiah, *Lo he is here*, or he is there, when the kingdom of God was abroad, and already among them, *Luke xvii. 21.*

2. He tells them of his preference above himself; he comes after me, and yet is preferred before me: This he had said before; he adds here, whose *shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose*; I am not fit to be named the same day with him; it is an honour too great for me to pretend to be in the meanest office about him. Allude, *1 Sam. xxv. 41.* Those to whom Christ is precious, reckon his service, even the most despised instances of it, an honour to them. See *Psal. lxxxiv. 10.* If so great a man as John, accounted himself unworthy of the honour of being near Christ, how unworthy then should we account ourselves! Now one would think these chief priests and Pharisees, upon this intimation given concerning the approach of the Messiah, should presently have asked, who, and where this excellent person was; and who more likely to tell them than he who had given them this general notice? No, they did not think that was any part of their business or concern; they came to molest John, not to receive any instructions from him: so that their ignorance was wilful; they might have known Christ, and would not.

Lastly, Notice is taken of the place where all this was done, *ver. 28.* *In Bethabara beyond Jordan*. Bethabara signifies the *house of passage*; some think it was the very place where Israel passed over Jordan into the land of promise, under the conduct of Joshua; there was opened the way into the gospel-state by Jesus Christ. It was at a great distance from Jerusalem, beyond Jordan; probably, because what he did there would be least offensive to the government; Amos must go prophesy in the country, not near the court; but it was sad that Jerusalem should put so far from her the things that belonged to her peace. He made this confession in the same place where he was baptizing, that all those who attended his baptism might be witnesses of it, and none might say, they knew not what to make of him.

29. ¶ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. 30. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. 31. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. 32. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven, like a dove, and it abode upon him. 33. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the holy Ghost. 34. And I saw, and bare record



cord that this is the Son of God. 35. ¶ Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples: 36. And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God.

We have, in these verses, an account of John's testimony concerning Jesus Christ, which he witnessed to his own disciples that followed him. As soon as ever Christ was baptized, he was immediately hurried into the wilderness to be tempted; there he was forty days; during his absence, John had continued to bear testimony to him, and to tell the people of him; but now at last he sees Jesus coming to him, returning from the wilderness of temptation: As soon as that conflict was over, Christ presently returned to John, who was preaching, baptizing. Now Christ was tempted for example and encouragement to us; and this teacheth us, (1.) That the hardships of a tempted state should engage us to keep close to ordinances; to go into the sanctuary of God, Psal. lxxiii. 17. Our combats with Satan should oblige us to keep close to the communion of saints: two are better than one. (2.) That the honours of a victorious state must not set us above ordinances. Christ had triumphed over Satan, and been attended by angels, and yet after all, he returns to the place where John was preaching and baptizing. As long as we are on this side heaven, whatever extraordinary visits of divine grace we may have here at any time, we must still keep close to the ordinary means of grace and comfort, and walk with God in them.

Now here are two testimonies born by John to Christ, but those two agree in one.

First, Here is his testimony to Christ on the first day that he saw him coming from the wilderness; and here four things are witnessed by him concerning Christ, when he had him before his eyes.

1. That he is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, ver. 29. Let us learn here,

1. That Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God, which speaks him the great sacrifice by whom atonement is made for sin, and man reconciled to God. Of all the legal sacrifices, he chuseth to allude to the lambs that were offered, not only because a lamb is an emblem of meekness, and Christ must be led as a lamb to the slaughter, Isa. liii. 7. but with a special reference, (1.) To the daily sacrifice which was offered every morning and evening continually, and that was always a lamb, Exod. xxix. 38. which was a type of Christ, as the everlasting propitiation, whose blood continually speaks. (2.) To the paschal lamb, the blood of which being sprinkled upon the door-posts, secured the Israelites from the stroke of the destroying angel. Christ is our passover, 1 Cor. v. 7.

He is the Lamb of God; he is appointed by him, Rom. iii. 25. he was devoted to him, John xvii. 19. and he was accepted with him; in him he was well pleased. The lot which fell on the goat that was to be offered for a sin-offering, is called the Lord's lot, Lev. xviii. 8, 9. So Christ, who was to make atonement for sin, is called the Lamb of God.

2. That Jesus Christ, as the Lamb of God, takes away the sin of the world. This was his undertaking, he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26. John Baptist had called people to repent of their sins in order to the remission of them: Now here he shews how, and by whom, that remission was to be expected; what ground of hope have we that our sins shall be pardoned upon our repentance, though our repentance makes no satisfaction for them? This ground of hope we have, Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God.

(1.) He takes away sin. He being mediator between God and man, takes away that which is above any thing offensive to the holiness of God, and destructive to the happiness of man. He came, 1. To take away the guilt of sin by the merit of his death, to vacate the judgment, and reverse the attainder, which mankind lay under, by an act of indemnity, which all penitent, obedient believers may claim the benefit of. 2. To take away the power of sin by the Spirit of his grace, so that it shall not have dominion, Rom. vi. 14. Christ, as the Lamb of God, washeth us from our sins in his own blood, i. e. he both justifies and sanctifies us: He taketh away sin. He is ὁ ἀγνῶν, he is taking away the sin of the world, which speaks it not a single, but a continued act; it is his constant work and office, to take away sin, which is such a work of time that it will never be completed till time shall be no more. He is always taking away sin by the continual intercession of his blood in heaven, and the continual influence of his grace on earth.

(2.) He takes away the sin of the world; purchased pardon for all those that repent and believe the gospel, of what country, nation, or language soever they be. The legal sacrifices had reference only to the sins of Israel, to make atonement for them; but the Lamb of God was offered to be a propitiation for the sin of the whole world, see 1 John ii. 12. This is encouraging to our faith; if Christ takes away the sin of the world, then why not my sin? Christ levelled his force at the main body of sin's army, struck at the root, and aimed at the overthrow of that wickedness which the whole world lay in: God was in him reconciling the world to himself.

(3.) He doth this by taking it upon himself. He is the Lamb of God that bears the sin of the world, so the margin reads it. He bore sin for us, and so bears it from us; he bore the sin of many, as the scape goat had the sins of Israel put upon his head, Lev. xvi. 21. God could have taken away the sin, by taking away the sinner, as he took away the sin of the old world; but he has found out a way of abolishing the sin, and yet sparing the sinner, by making his Son sin for us.

3. That it is our duty, with an eye of faith, to behold the Lamb of God thus taking away the sin of the world. See him taking away sin, and let that increase our hatred of sin, and resolutions against it: Let not us hold that fast which the Lamb of God came to take away; for Christ will either take our sins away, or take us away. Let it increase our love to Christ, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, Rev. i. 5. Whatever God is pleased to take away from us, if withal he take away our sins, we have reason to be thankful, and no reason to complain.

2. That this was he of whom he had spoken before, ver. 30, 31. This is he, this person whom I now point at, you see where he stands, This is he of whom I said, after me cometh a man. Observe,

(1.) This honour John had above all the prophets, that whereas they spoke of him as one that should come, he saw him already come. This is he: He sees him now, he sees him nigh, Numb. xxiv. 17. Such a difference there is between present faith, and future vision. Now we love one whom we have not seen, then we shall see him whom our souls love; shall see him and say, This is he of whom I said, my Christ, and my all; my beloved, and my friend.

(2.) John calls Christ a man; after me comes a man, ἀνὴρ, a strong man: Like the man, the branch, or the man of God's right hand.

(3.) He refers himself to what he had said of him before, This is he of whom I said. Note, Those who have said the most honourable things of Christ, will never see cause to unsay them; but the more they know him, the more they are confirmed in their esteem of him. John still thinks as meanly of himself, and as highly of Christ as ever. Though Christ appeared not in any external pomp or grandeur, yet John is not ashamed to own, This is he I meant, that is preferred before me. And it was necessary that John should thus shew them the person, otherwise they could not have believed that one who made so mean a figure should be he of whom John had spoken such great things.

(4.) He protests against any confederacy or combination with this Jesus; And I knew him not. Though there was some relation between them, Elizabeth was cousin to the virgin Mary, yet there was no acquaintance at all between them; John had no personal knowledge of Jesus till he saw him come to his baptism. Their manner of life had been different; John had spent his time in the wilderness, in solitude; Jesus at Nazareth, in conversation: There was no correspondence, no interviews between them, that the matter might appear to be wholly carried on by the direction and disposal of heaven, and not by any design or concert of the persons themselves. And as he hereby disowns all collusion, so also all partiality, and sinister regard in it; he could not be supposed to favour him as a friend, for there was no friendship or familiarity between them. Nay, as he could not be biassed to speak honourably of him because he was a stranger to him, so really being such a stranger to him, he was not able to say any thing of him but what he received from above, to which he appeals, John iii. 27. Note, They who are taught, believe and confess one whom they have not seen, and blessed are they who yet have believed.

5. That the great intention of John's ministry and baptism was to introduce Jesus Christ. That he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. Observe, (1.) Though John did not know Jesus by face, yet he knew that he should be made manifest. Note, We may know the certainty of that which yet we do not fully know the nature and intention of. We know that the happiness of heaven shall be made manifest to Israel, but cannot describe it. (2.) The general assurance John had that Christ should be made manifest, served to carry him with diligence and resolution through his work, though he was kept in the dark concerning particulars: Therefore am I come. Our assurance of the reality of things, though they are unseen, is enough to quicken us to our duty. (3.) God reveals himself to his people by degrees. At first John knew no more concerning Christ, but that he should be made manifest, in confidence of that he came baptizing, and now he is favoured with a sight of him. They that upon God's word believe what they do not see, shall shortly see what they now believe. (4.) The ministry of the word and sacraments is designed for no other end, but to lead people to Christ, and to make him more and more manifest. (5.) Baptism with water made way for the manifesting of Christ, as it supposed our corruption and filthiness, and signified our cleansing by him who is the fountain opened.

3. That this was he upon whom the Spirit descended from heaven like a dove. For the confirming of his testimony concerning



cerning Christ, he here voucheth the extraordinary appearance at his baptism, in which God himself bore witness to him: This was a considerable proof of Christ's mission. Now to assure us of the truth of it, we are here told, *ver. 32, 33.*

1. That John Baptist saw it; he *bare record*; did not relate it as a story, but solemnly attested it, with all the seriousness and solemnity of *witness-bearing*: He made affidavit of it; *I saw the Spirit descending from heaven*: John could not see the Spirit, but he saw the dove, which was a sign and representation of the Spirit. The Spirit came now upon Christ both to *make him fit for his work*, and to *make him known to the world*. Christ was notified not by the descent of a crown upon him, or by a transfiguration, but by the descent of the Spirit as a dove upon him, to qualify him for his undertaking. Thus the first testimony given to the apostles was by the descent of the Spirit upon them: God's children are made manifest by their *graces*, their glories are reserved for their future state. Observe, (1.) The Spirit descended *from heaven*, for every good and perfect gift is *from above*. (2.) He descended *like a dove*, an emblem of meekness, and mildness, and gentleness, which makes him *fit to teach*. The dove brought the olive branch of peace, *Gen. viii. 11.* (3.) The Spirit that descended upon Christ, *abode upon him*, as was foretold, *Isa. xi. 2.* The Spirit did not *move him at times*, as Samson, *Judg. xiii. 25.* but *at all times*. The Spirit was given to him *without measure*; it was his prerogative to have the Spirit always upon him, so that he could at no time be found either *unqualified* for his work himself, or *unfurnished* for the supply of those that seek to him for his grace.

2. That he was *bidden to expect it*, which very much corroborates the proof. It was not John's bare conjecture, that surely he on whom he saw the Spirit descending, was the Son of God; but it was an *instituted* sign given him before, by which he might know it for certain, *ver. 33. I knew him not.* This he insists much upon, that he knew no more of him than other people did, otherwise than by revelation: But *he that sent me to baptize, gave me this sign, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, the same is he.*

1. See here what sure grounds John went upon in his ministry and baptism, that he might proceed with all imaginable satisfaction. (1.) He did not run *without sending*; God *sent him to baptize*: He had a warrant from heaven for what he did. When a minister's call is clear, his comfort is sure, though his success is not always so. (2.) He did not run *without speeding*; for when he was sent to *baptize with water*, he was directed to one that should *baptize with the Holy Ghost*; under that notion John Baptist was taught to expect Christ, as one who would give that repentance and faith which he called people to, and would carry on, and complete that blessed structure which he was now laying the foundation of. Note, It is a great comfort to Christ's ministers in their administration of the outward signs, that he whose ministers they are, can confer the grace signified thereby, and so put life and soul, and power, into their ministrations; can speak to the heart what they speak to the ear, and *breathe upon the dry bones*, on which they *prophecy*.

2. See what sure grounds he went upon in his designation of the person of the Messiah. God had before given him a sign, as he did to Samuel concerning Saul, on whom thou shalt see the Spirit descend, *that same is he*; this not only prevented any mistakes, but gave him boldness in his testimony: When he had such assurance as this given him, he could speak with assurance. When John was told this before, his expectations could not but be very much raised; and when the event exactly answered the prediction, his faith could not but be much confirmed. And these things are written that we may believe.

4. That he is *the Son of God*. This is the conclusion of John's testimony, that in which all the particulars centre, as the *quod erat demonstrandum*; *ver. 34. I saw and bare record, that this is the Son of God.*

1. The truth asserted, is, That *this is the Son of God*; the voice from heaven proclaimed him, and John subscribed to it; not only that he should baptize with the Holy Ghost by a divine authority, but that he has a divine nature: This was the peculiar Christian creed, that Jesus is the Son of God, *Matt. xvi. 16.* and here is the first framing of it.

2. John's testimony to it; *I saw and bare record*. Not only I now bear record of it, but I did so as soon as I had seen it. Observe, (1.) What he *saw* he was forward to *bare record* of, as they, *Acts iv. 20. We cannot but speak the things which we have seen.* (2.) What he *bare record* of was what he *saw*. Christ's witnesses were eye-witnesses, and therefore the more to be credited: They did not speak by hear-say, and report, *2 Pet. i. 16.*

Secondly, Here is John's testimony to Christ the next day after, *ver. 35, 36.* Where observe,

1. He took every opportunity that offered itself to lead people to Christ. *John stood looking upon Jesus as he walked.* It should seem John was now retired from the multitude, and was in close conversation with two of his disciples. Note, Ministers should not only in their publick preaching, but in their private converse, witness to Christ, and serve his interests. He saw Jesus walking at some distance, yet did not go to him himself,

because he would shun every thing that might give the least colour to suspect a combination. He was *looking upon Jesus, ἐμβλέψας*, he looked stedfastly, and fixed his eyes upon him. Those that would lead others to Christ, must be diligent and frequent in the *contemplation* of him themselves. John had seen Christ before, but now looked upon him, *1 John i. 1.*

2. He repeated the same testimony which he had given to Christ the day before, though he could have delivered some other great truth concerning him; but thus he would shew that he was uniform and constant in his testimony, and consistent with himself. His doctrine was the same in private that it was in publick, as Paul's was, *Acts xx. 20, 21.* It is good to have that repeated which we have heard, *Phil. iii. 1.* The doctrine of Christ's sacrifice for the taking away of the sin of the world, ought especially to be insisted upon by all good ministers. Christ, the Lamb of God, *Christ and him crucified.*

3. He intended this especially for his two disciples that stood with him; he was willing to turn them over to Christ, for to this end he bore witness to Christ in their hearing, that they might leave all to follow him; even that they might leave him. He did not reckon that he lost those disciples that went over from him to Christ, any more than the school-master reckons that scholar lost whom he sends to the university. John gathered disciples not for himself, but for Christ, to *prepare them for the Lord*, *Luke i. 17.* So far was he from being jealous of Christ's growing interest, that there was nothing he was more desirous of. Humble, generous souls will give others their due praise, without fear of diminishing themselves by it. What we have of reputation, as well as of other things, will not be the less for our giving every body their own.

37. And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where dwellest thou? 39. He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. 40. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 42. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.

We have here the turning over of two disciples from John to Jesus, and one of them fetching in a third, and these are the first fruits of Christ's disciples; see how small the church was in its beginnings, and what the dawning of the day of its great things were.

First, Andrew, and another with him, were the two that John Baptist had directed to Christ, *ver. 37.* who the other was we are not told; some think it was Thomas, comparing *chap. xxi. 2.* others, that it was John himself, the penman of this gospel, who useth industriously to conceal his name, *John xiii. 23.* and *xx. 3.*

1. Here is their readiness to go over to Christ, they *heard John speak* of Christ as the *Lamb of God*, and they *followed Jesus*: Probably they had heard John say the same thing the day before, and then it had not the effect upon them which now it had; see the benefit of repetition, and of private personal converse. They heard him speak of Christ as the *Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world*, and that made them *follow him*. Note, The strongest and most prevailing argument with a sensible awakened soul to follow Christ; is, that it is he, and he only that *takes away sin*.

2. The kind notice Christ took of them, *ver. 38.* they came behind him; but though he had his back towards them, he was soon aware of them, and *turned*, and *saw them following*. Note, Christ takes early cognizance of the first motions of a soul towards him, and the first step taken in the way to heaven; see *Isa. lxiv. 5. Luke xv. 20.* He did not stay till they begged leave to speak with him, but spoke first: What communion there is between a soul and Christ, it is he that *begins the discourse*. He saith unto them, *What seek ye?* This was not a reprimand for their boldness in intruding into his company; he that came to *seek us*, never checked any for *seeking* him; but, on the contrary, it is a kind invitation of them into his acquaintance, whom he saw *bashful and modest*; come, what have you to say to me? What is your petition? What is your request? Note, They whose business it is to instruct people in the affairs of their souls, should be humble and mild, and easy of access, and should encourage those that apply to them. The question Christ put to them, is what we should all put to ourselves, when we begin to follow Christ, and take upon us the profession of his holy religion; *What seek ye?* What do we design, and desire? Those that follow



follow Christ, and yet seek the world, or themselves, or the praise of men, deceive themselves. *What seek we in seeking Christ, do we seek a teacher, ruler, and reconciler? In following Christ do we seek the favour of God and eternal life? If our eye be single in this, we are full of light.*

3. Their modest enquiry concerning the place of his abode; *Rabbi, where dwellest thou?* (1.) In calling him Rabbi, they intimate, that their design in coming to him, was to be taught by him; *rabbi*, signifies *master*, a teaching master; the Jews called their doctors or learned men, rabbies. The word comes from *rab*, *multus*, or *magnus*, a *rabbi*, a *great man*, and one, that as we say, hath *much in him*. Never was there such a *rabbi* as our Lord Jesus, such a *great one*, in whom were *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. These came to Christ to be his *scholars*, so must all those that apply themselves to him. John had told them he was the *Lamb of God*; now this *Lamb* is worthy to *take the book, and open the seals* as a *rabbi*, *Rev. v. 9*. And unless we give up ourselves to be ruled and taught by him, he will not *take away our sins*. (2.) In asking *where he dwelt*, they intimate a desire to be better acquainted with him: Christ was a stranger in this country, so that they mean, where was his *inn*? Where he *lodged*? For there they would attend him at some seasonable time when he should appoint, to receive instruction from him; they would not press rudely upon him, when it was not proper: Civility and good manners well become those who follow Christ: And besides, they hoped to have more from him than they could have in a short conference now by the way. They resolved to make a business, not a by-business, of conversing with Christ. Those that have had some communion with Christ, cannot but desire, (1.) A *further communion* with him; they follow on to know more of him. (2.) A *fixed communion* with him; where they might sit down at his feet, and abide by his instructions: It is not enough to take a turn with Christ now and then, but we must *lodge with him*.

4. The courteous invitation Christ gave them to his lodgings; *He saith unto them, come and see*: Thus shall good desires towards Christ, and communion with him, be countenanced. (1.) He invites them to come to his lodgings: the nearer we approach to Christ, the more we see of his beauty and excellency. Deceivers maintain their interest in their followers by keeping them at a distance, but that which Christ desired to recommend him to the esteem and affections of his followers, was, that they would *come and see*; *come and see* what a mean lodging I have, what poor accommodations I take up with, that you may not expect any worldly advantage by following me, as they did, who made their court to the scribes and Pharisees, and called them *Rabbi*. *Come and see* what you must count upon if you follow me: See *Matth. viii. 20*. (2.) He invites them to come *presently*, and without delay. They asked where he lodged, that they might wait upon him at a more convenient season, but Christ invites them immediately to *come and see*; never in better time than now. Hence learn, (1.) As to others, That it is best taking people when they are in a good mind; strike while the iron is hot. (2.) As to ourselves, That it is wisdom to embrace the present opportunities: *now is the accepted time*, *2 Cor. vi. 2*.

5. Their chearful and (no doubt) thankful acceptance of his invitation; they *came and saw where he dwelt*, and *abode with him that day*. It had been more modesty and manners than had done them good, if they had refused this offer. (1.) They readily went along with him; they *came and saw where he dwelt*. Gracious souls chearfully accept Christ's gracious invitations; as David, *Psal. xxvii. 8*. They enquired not how they might be accommodated with him, but would put that to the venture, and make the best of what they found: It is good being where Christ is, wherever it be. (2.) They were so well pleased with what they found, that they *abode with him that day*; Master, it is good to be here, and he bid them welcome. It was about the tenth hour: Some think that John reckons according to the Roman computation, and that it was about ten a clock in the morning, and they staid with him till night; others think that John reckons as the other evangelists did, according to the Jewish computation, and that it was four a clock in the afternoon, and they abode with him that night, and the next day. Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, that this next day that they spent with Christ, was a sabbath-day, and it being late, they could not get home before the sabbath. As it is our duty wherever we are, to contrive to spend the sabbath, as much as may be to our spiritual benefit and advantage; so they are blessed, who by the lively exercises of faith, love, and devotion, spend their sabbaths in communion with Christ. These are Lord's days indeed, *days of the Son of man*.

Secondly, Andrew brought his brother Peter to Christ; if Peter had been the first-born of Christ's disciples, the Papists would have made a noise with it: he did, indeed, afterwards come to be more eminent in gifts, but Andrew had the honour, first to be acquainted with Christ, and to be the instrument of bringing Peter to him. Observe,

1. The information which Andrew gave to Peter, with an intimation to come to Christ.

1. He found him: He first finds his own brother Simon; his finding implies his seeking him. Simon came along with Andrew to attend John's ministry and baptism, and Andrew knew where to

look for him. Perhaps the other disciple that was with him, went out to seek some friend of his, at the same time, but Andrew sped first; he first findeth Simon, who came only to attend on John, but has his expectations out-done, he meets with Jesus.

2. He told him whom they had found; we have found the Messias. Observe, (1.) He speaks *humbly*, not *I* have found, assuming the honour of the discovery to himself, but *we* have, rejoicing that he had shared with others in it. (2.) He speaks *exultingly*, and with triumph; *we have found* that pearl of great price, that true treasure; and having found it, he proclaims it, as those lepers, *2 Kings viii. 9*. for he knows he shall have never the less in Christ for others sharing. (3.) He speaks *intelligently*; *we have found the Messias*, which was more than had yet been said: John had said he is the *Lamb of God*, and the *Son of God*, which Andrew compares with the scriptures of the Old Testament, and comparing them together, concludes he is the Messiah promised to the fathers, for it is now that the fulness of time is come: Thus by *making God's testimonies his meditation*, he speaks more clearly concerning Christ than ever his teacher had done, *Psal. cxix. 99*.

3. He brought him to Jesus; would not undertake to instruct him himself, but brought him to the fountain-head, persuaded him to come to Christ, and introduced him. Now this was, (1.) An instance of true love to his brother, his own brother, so he is called here, because he was very dear to him. Note, We ought, with a particular concern and application, to endeavour the spiritual welfare of those that are related to us; for their relation to us, adds both to the *obligation*, and to the *opportunity* of doing good to their souls. (2.) It was an effect of his day's conversation with Christ. Note, The best evidence of our profiting by the means of grace, is the piety and usefulness of our conversation afterwards: Hereby it appeared that Andrew had been with Jesus, that he was so full of him, that he had been in the mount, for his face shone. He knew there was enough in Christ for all; and having tasted that he is gracious, could not rest till those he loved had tasted it too. Note, True grace hates monopolies, and loves not to eat its morsels alone.

2. The entertainment that Jesus Christ gave to Peter, who was never the less welcome for his being influenced by his brother, to come, *ver. 43*. Observe,

1. Christ called him by his name: *When Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the Son of Jona*. It should seem that Peter was utterly a stranger to Christ, and if so, (1.) It was a proof of Christ's omniscience, that upon the first sight, without any enquiry, he could tell the name, both of him and of his father: *The Lord knows them that are his*; and their whole case. However, (2.) It was an instance of his condescending grace and favour, that he did thus freely and affably call him by his name, though he was of mean extraction, and *vir nullius nominis*. It was an instance of God's favour to Moses, that he *knew him by name*, *Exod. xxxiii. 17*. Some observe the signification of these names, *Simon*, obedient, *Jona*, a dove. An obedient, dove-like spirit qualifies us to be the disciples of Christ.

2. He gave him a new name; Cephas.

1. His giving him a name speaks *Christ's favour* to him. A new name speaks some great dignity, *Rev. ii. 17*. *Isa. lxii. 2*. By this, Christ not only wiped off the reproach of his mean and obscure parentage, but adopted him into his family, as one of his own.

2. The name which he gave him speaks his *fidelity* to Christ. *Thou shalt be called Cephas*, that is Hebrew for a stone, which is by interpretation *Peter*; so it should be rendered, as *Acts ix. 39*. *Tabitha*, which by interpretation is called *Dorcas*; the former Hebrew, the latter Greek, for a young roe. Peter's natural temper was stiff and hardy, and resolute, which I take to be the principal reason why Christ called him *Cephas*, a stone. When Christ afterwards prayed for him, that his faith might not fail, that so he might be firm to Christ himself, and at the same time bid him *strengthen his brethren*, and lay out himself for the support of others, then he made him what he here called him, *Cephas*, a stone. Those that come to Christ must come with a fixed resolution to be firm and constant to him, like a stone, solid and steadfast; and it is by his grace that they are so: His saying, *be thou steady*, makes them so. Now this doth no more prove that Peter was the singular, or only, rock upon which this church is built, than the calling of James and John, *Boanerges*, proves them the only sons of thunder; or the calling of Josias, Barnabas, proves him the only son of consolation.

43. ¶ The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. 44. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. 47. Jesus



47. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and faith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. 48. Nathanael faith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. 49. Nathanael answered and faith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son God, thou art the King of Israel. 50. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. 51. And he faith unto him, Verily, verily I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

We have here the call of Philip and Nathanael.

First, Philip was called immediately to Christ himself, not as Andrew, who was directed to Christ by John; or Peter, who was invited by his brothers. God has various methods of bringing his chosen ones home to himself. But whatever means he uses, he is not tied to any.

1. Philip was called in a *preventing* way: *Jesus findeth Philip*, Christ sought us, and found us, before we made any enquiries after him. The name Philip is of a Greek original, and much used among the Gentiles, which some make an instance of the degeneracy of the Jewish church at this time, and their conformity to the nations; yet Christ changed not his name.

2. He was called the *day following*: See how closely Christ applied himself to his business. When work is to be done for God, we must not *lose a day*. Yet observe, Christ now called one or two a day, but after the Spirit was poured out, there were thousands a day effectually called, in which was fulfilled, *Joh. xiv. 12*.

3. Jesus *would go forth into Galilee* to call him. Christ will find out all those that are given to him, wherever they are, and none of them shall be lost.

4. Philip was brought to be a disciple, by the power of Christ going along with that word, *Follow me*. See the nature of true Christianity; it is *following Christ*, devoting ourselves to his *converse and conduct*, attending his motions, and treading in his steps: See the efficacy of the grace of Christ making the call of his word to prevail; it is the *rod of his strength*.

5. We are told that Philip was of Bethsaida, and Andrew and Peter were so too, *ver. 44*. These eminent disciples received not honour from, but reflected honour upon the place of their nativity. Bethsaida, signifies the *house of nets*, because inhabited mostly by fishermen; then Christ chose disciples, who were to be furnished with extraordinary gifts, and therefore needed not the ordinary advantages of learning. Bethsaida was a wicked place, *Matth. xi. 21*. yet even there was a remnant, according to the election of grace.

Secondly, Nathanael was invited to Christ by Philip, and much is said concerning him. In which we may observe,

1. What passed between Philip and Nathanael, in which appears an observable mixture of pious zeal with weakness, such as is usually found in beginners, that are yet but *asking the way to Zion*. Here is,

(1.) The joyful news that Philip brought to Nathanael, *ver. 45*. As Andrew before, so Philip here, having got some knowledge of Christ himself, rests not till he has *made manifest the favour of that knowledge*. Philip, though newly come into an acquaintance with Christ himself, yet steps aside to seek Nathanael. Note, When we have the fairest opportunities of getting good to our own souls, yet even then we must seek opportunities of doing good to the souls of others; remembering the words of Christ, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*, *Acts xx. 35*. O, faith Philip, *we have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write*. Observe here, (1.) What a transport of joy Philip was in upon this new acquaintance with Christ; we have found him whom we have so often talked of, so long wished and waited for: at last *he is come, he is come*, and *we have found him*. (2.) What an advantage it was to him, that he was so well acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament, which prepared his mind for the reception of evangelical light, and made the entrance of it much the more easy: *Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write*. What was written entirely, and from eternity, in the *book of the divine counsels*, was, in part, at sundry times, and in divers manners, copied out into the book of the *divine revelations*. Glorious things were written there concerning the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, Shiloh, the Prophet like Moses, the Son of David, Immanuel, the Man, the Branch, Messiah, the Prince: Philip had studied these things, and was full of them, which made him readily welcome Christ. (3.) What mistakes and weaknesses he laboured under; he called Christ, *Jesus of Nazareth*, whereas he was of Bethlehem; and the *son of Joseph*, whereas he was but his *supposed* son. Young beginners in religion are subject to mistakes, which time and the grace of God will rectify. It was his weakness to say, *We have found him*, for Christ found them, before they found Christ: He did not yet *apprehend*, as Paul did, how he was *apprehended of Christ Jesus*, *Phil. iii. 12*.

No. xciii.

(2.) The objection which Nathanael made against this; *ver. 46*. *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* Here, (1.) His caution was commendable; that he did not lightly assent to every thing that was said, but took it into examination; our rule is to *prove all things*. But, (2.) His objection arose from ignorance. If he meant that no good thing could come out of Nazareth, it was owing to his ignorance of the divine grace, as if that were less affected to one place than another, or tied itself to mens foolish and ill-natured observations. If he meant that the Messiah, that great, good thing could not come out of Nazareth, so far he was right; Moses, in the law, said that he should come out of Judah, and the prophets had assigned Bethlehem for the place of his nativity, but then he was ignorant of the matter of *fact*, that this Jesus was born at Bethlehem; so that the blunder Philip made in calling him Jesus of Nazareth, occasioned this objection. Note, The mistakes of preachers often give rise to the prejudices of hearers.

3. The short reply which Philip gave to this objection; *Come and see*. (1.) It was his *weakness*, that he could not give a satisfactory answer to it; yet it is the common case of young beginners in religion: We may *know* enough to *satisfy* ourselves, and yet not be able to *say* enough to *silence* the cavils of a subtle adversary. (2.) It was his *wisdom* and zeal, that when he could not answer the objection himself, he would have him go to one that could: *Come and see*. Let not us stand arguing here, and raising difficulties to ourselves, which we cannot get over; let us go and converse with Christ himself, and these difficulties will all vanish presently. Note, It is folly to spend that time in doubtful disputation, which might be better spent, and to much better purpose, in the exercises of piety and devotion. *Come and see; not, go and see*, but *come*, and I will go along with thee; as *Isa. ii. 3*. *Jer. 1. 5*. From this parley between Philip and Nathanael, we may observe, (1.) That many people are kept from the ways of religion, by the unreasonable prejudices they have conceived against religion, upon the account of some foreign circumstances which do not at all touch the merits of the cause. (2.) The best way to remove those prejudices they have entertained against religion, is to prove themselves, and make trial of it. Let us not answer this matter before we hear it.

2. What passed between Nathanael and our Lord Jesus. He came and *saw*, not in vain.

1. Our Lord Jesus bore a very honourable testimony to Nathanael's integrity, *Jesus saw him coming*, and met him with favourable encouragement; he said of him to those about him, Nathanael himself being within hearing, *Behold an Israelite indeed*. Observe,

1. That he did *commend* him; not to flatter him, or puff him up with a good conceit of himself, but, perhaps, because he knew him to be a *modest* man, if not a *melancholy* man, one that had hard and mean thoughts of himself; was ready to doubt his own sincerity, and Christ by his testimony put the matter out of doubt. Nathanael had, more than any of the candidates, objected against Christ, but Christ hereby shewed that he excused it, and was not extreme to mark what he said amiss, because he knew his heart was upright. He did not retort upon him, *Can any good thing come out of Cana?* (*John xxi. 2*.) an obscure town in Galilee, but kindly gives him this character, to encourage us to hope for acceptance with Christ, notwithstanding our weakness, and to teach us to speak honourably of those, who, without cause, have spoken slightly of us; and to give them their due praise.

2. That he commended him for his integrity.

1. *Behold an Israelite indeed*. It is Christ's prerogative to know what men are *indeed*; we can but *hope the best*. The whole nation were Israelites in name, but *all are not Israel that are of Israel*, *Rom. ix. 6*. but here was an *Israelite indeed*. (1.) A sincere follower of the good example of Israel, whose character it was, that he was a *plain man*, in opposition to Esau's character of a *cunning man*. He was a genuine son of *honest Jacob*, not only of his *seed*, but of his *spirit*. (2.) A sincere professor of the faith of Israel; he was true to the religion he professed, and lived up to it; he was really as good as he seemed, and his practice of a *piece* with his profession. He is the Jew that is one *inwardly*, *Rom. ii. 29*. so he *the Christian*.

2. He is one in whom is *no guile*, that is the character of an Israelite indeed, a Christian indeed. *No guile* towards men; a man without trick or design; a man that one may trust: *no guile* towards God, that is, sincere in his repentance for sin; sincere in his covenanting with God; in whose spirit is *no guile*, *Psal. xxxii. 2*. he doth not say *without guilt*, but *without guile*. Though in many things he is foolish and forgetful, yet in nothing false, nor *wickedly departing from God*: there is no allowed, approved guilt in him; not painted, though he have his spots; *behold this Israelite indeed*. (1.) Take notice of him, that you may learn his way, and do like him. (2.) Admire him; *behold and wonder*. The hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees had so leavened the Jewish church and nation, and their religion was so degenerated into formality, or state-policy, that an Israelite indeed was a *man wondered at*; a miracle of divine grace, like Job, *chap. i. 8*.

2. Nathanael is much surprized at this, upon which Christ gives him a further proof of his omniscience, and a kind memorial of his former devotion.



1. Here is Nathanael's modesty, in that he was soon put out of countenance at the kind notice Christ was pleased to take of him. *Whence knowest thou me?* Me that am unworthy of thy cognizance; *who am I, O Lord God?* 2 Sam. vii. 18. This was an evidence of his sincerity, that he did not catch at the praise he met with, but declined it. Christ knows us better than we know ourselves; we know not what is in a man's heart by looking in his face, but all things are naked and open before Christ, *Heb. iv. 12, 13.* Doth Christ know us? Let us covet to know him.

(2.) Here is Christ's further *manifestation* of himself to him; *before Philip called thee, I saw thee.*

(1.) He gives him to understand that he *knew him*, and so manifests his divinity. It is God's prerogative infallibly to know all persons, and all things; by this Christ proved himself to be God upon many occasions. It was prophesied concerning the Messiah, that he should be of *quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*, i. e. in judging the sincerity and degree of the fear of God in others, and that he should not judge after the sight of his eyes, *Isa. xi. 2, 3.* Here he answers that prediction. See 2 Tim. ii. 19.

(2.) That before Philip called him, he saw him under the fig-tree; this manifests a particular kindness for him. (1.) His eye was towards him before Philip called him, which was the first time that ever Nathanael was acquainted with Christ: Christ has knowledge of us, before we have any knowledge of him; see *Isa. xlv. 4. Gal. iv. 9.* (2.) His eye was upon him when he was *under the fig-tree*; this was a private token which no body understood but Nathanael; when thou wast retired *under the fig-tree* in thy garden, and thoughtest no eye saw thee, I had then mine eye upon thee, and saw that which was very acceptable. It is most probable, Nathanael under the fig-tree, was employed as Isaac in the field, in meditation and prayer, and communion with God. Perhaps, then, and there, it was, that he solemnly joined himself to the Lord in an inviolable covenant: Christ saw in secret, and by this publick notice of it, did in part reward him openly. *Sitting under the fig-tree* notes quietness and composedness of spirit, which much befriends communion with God: See *Mic. iv. 4. Zech. iii. 10.* Nathanael herein was an Israelite indeed, that, like Israel, he *wrestled with God alone*, *Gen. xxxii. 24.* prayed, not like the hypocrites in the corners of the streets, but under the fig-tree.

3. Nathanael hereby obtained a full assurance of faith in Jesus Christ, expressed in that noble acknowledgment; *ver. 49. Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel:* That is, in short, thou art the true Messiah. Observe here,

1. How *firmly* he believed *with the heart*. Though he had lately laboured under some prejudices concerning Christ, they were now all vanished. Note, The grace of God in working faith casts down imaginations. Now he asks no more, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? for he believes Jesus of Nazareth to be the chief good, and embraceth him accordingly.

2. How *freely* he confessed *with the mouth*. And his confession is made in form of an adoration, directed to our Lord Jesus himself, which is a proper way of confessing our faith. (1.) He confesseth Christ's prophetic office, in calling him Rabbi, a title which the Jews commonly gave to their teachers: Christ is the great Rabbi, at whose feet we must all be brought up. (2.) He confesseth his divine nature and mission, in calling him the Son of God, that Son of God spoken of, *Psal. ii. 7.* though he had but a human form and aspect, yet having a divine knowledge, the knowledge of the heart, and of things distant and secret, from thence he concludes him to be the *Son of God*. (3.) He confesseth, *Thou art the king of Israel*; that king of Israel whom we have been long waiting for. If he be the Son of God, he is king of the Israel of God. Nathanael hereby proves himself an Israelite indeed, that he so readily owns and submits to the king of Israel.

4. Christ hereupon raiseth the hopes and expectations of Nathanael to something further, and greater than all this, *ver. 50, 51.* Christ is very tender of young converts, and will encourage good beginnings, though weak, *Matt. xii. 20.*

1. He here signifies his acceptance, and (it should seem) his admiration of the ready faith of Nathanael. *Because I said I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou?* He wonders that such a small indication of Christ's divine knowledge should have such an effect; it was a sign Nathanael's heart was prepared before hand, else the work had not been done so suddenly. Note, It is much for the honour of Christ and his grace, when the heart is surrendered to him at the first summons.

2. He promiseth him much greater helps for the confirmation and increase of his faith, that he had had for the first production of it.

1. In general, *Thou shalt see greater things than these*, stronger proofs of my being the Messiah; the miracles of Christ and his resurrection. Note, 1. To him that hath, and makes good use of what he hath, more shall be given. 2. Those who truly believe the gospel, will find its evidences grow upon them, and will see more and more cause to believe it. 3. Whatever discoveries Christ is pleased to make of himself to his people, while they are here in this world, he hath still greater things than these to make known to them; a glory yet further to be revealed.

2. In particular; not thou only, but ye, all you my disciples,

whose faith this is intended for the confirmation of, ye shall see heaven opened; that is more than telling Nathanael of his being under the fig-tree. This is introduced with a solemn preface, *Verily, verily I say unto you.* This commands both a *fixed attention* to what is said, as very weighty, and a *full assent* to it as undoubtedly true, I say it, whose word you may rely upon, *amen, amen.* None used this word at the beginning of a sentence but Christ, though the Jews often used it at the close of prayer, and sometimes doubled it. It is a solemn asseveration, Christ is called the *Amen*, *Rev. iii. 14.* and so some take it here, *I the Amen, the Amen, say unto you.* I the faithful witness. Note, The assurances we have of the glory to be revealed, are built upon the word of Christ.

Now see what it is that Christ assures them of. *Hereafter*, or *within a while*, or *ere long*, or from henceforth, ye shall see heaven opened.

1. It is a mean title that Christ here takes to himself, *the Son of man*; a title frequently applied to him in the gospel, but always by himself. Nathanael had called him the *Son of God*, and *king of Israel*: He calls himself *Son of man*, (1.) To express his *humility* in the midst of the honours done him. (2.) To teach his *humanity*, which is to be believed as well as his divinity. (3.) To intimate his present state of humiliation, that Nathanael might not expect this king of Israel to appear in external pomp.

2. Yet they are great things, he here foretels; ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

1. Some understand it literally, as pointing at some particular event. Either, (1.) There was some vision of Christ's glory, in which this was exactly fulfilled, which Nathanael was an eye-witness of, as Peter, and James, and John were of his transfiguration. There were many things which Christ did, and those in the presence of his disciples, which were not written, *John xx. 30.* and why not that? Or, (2.) It was fulfilled in the many ministrations of the angels to our Lord Jesus, especially that at his ascension, when heaven was opened to receive him, and the angels *ascended* and *descended* to attend him, and to do him honour, and this in the sight of the disciples. Christ's ascension was the great proof of his mission, and much confirmed the faith of his disciples, *John vi. 6, 7.* Or, (3.) It may refer to Christ's second coming to judge the world, when the heavens shall be open, and every eye shall see him, and the angels of God shall ascend and descend about him, as attendants on him, every one employed, and a busy day it will be. See 2 Thess. i. 10.

2. Others take it figuratively, as speaking of a state, or series of things, to commence *from henceforth*; and so we may understand it, (1.) Of Christ's *miracles*. Nathanael believed, because Christ, as the prophets of old, could tell him things secret; but what is this, Christ is now beginning a dispensation of miracles, much more great and strange than this, as if heaven were opened, and such a power shall be exerted by the Son of man, as if the angels which excel in strength, were continually attending his orders. Immediately after this, Christ began to work miracles, *chap. ii. 11.* Or, (2.) Of his *mediation*, and that blessed intercourse which he hath settled between heaven and earth, which his disciples should by degrees be let into the mystery of. (1.) By Christ as mediator, they shall see *heaven opened*, that we may enter into the holiest, by his blood, *Heb. x. 19, 20.* Heaven opened, that by faith we may look in, and at length may go in; may now behold the glory of the Lord, and hereafter enter into the joy of our Lord. And, (2.) They shall see *angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man*. Through Christ we have communion with and benefit by the holy angels, and things in heaven, and things on earth are reconciled, and gathered together. Christ is to us as Jacob's ladder, *Gen. xxviii. 12.* by whom angels continually ascend and descend for the good of the saints.

## C H A P. II.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we had an account of the first disciples whom Jesus called, Andrew and Peter, Philip and Nathanael. These were the first fruits to God and to the Lamb, *Rev. xiv. 4.* Now in this chapter, we have, (1.) The story of the first miracle which Jesus wrought, turning water into wine, at Cana of Galilee, *ver. 1—11.* and his appearing at Capernaum, *ver. 12.* (2.) The story of the first passover he kept at Jerusalem, after he began his publick ministry. His driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple, *ver. 13—17.* and the sign he gave to those who quarrelled with him for it, *ver. 18—22.* with an account of some half-thick believers that followed him thereupon for some time, *ver. 23—25.* but he knew them too well to put any confidence in them.

1. **A**ND the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there.



there. 2. And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. 3. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. 4. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. 5. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. 6. And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. 7. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. 8. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governour of the feast. And they bare it. 9. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew) the governour of the feast called the bridegroom, 10. And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. 11. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

We have here the story of Christ's miraculous converting of water into wine at a marriage in Cana of Galilee. There were some few so well disposed as to believe in Christ, and to follow him when he *did no miracle*; yet it was not likely many should be wrought upon, till he had something wherewith to answer those that asked, *what sign shewest thou?* He could have wrought miracles before, could have made them the common actions of his life, and the common entertainments of his friends; but miracles being designed for the sacred and solemn seals of his doctrine, he began not to work any, till he began to preach his doctrine. Now observe,

First, The occasions of this miracle. Maimondes observes it to be the honour of Moses, that all the signs he did in the wilderness, he did them *upon necessity*; we needed food, he brought us manna, and so did Christ. Observe,

1. The time, the *third day*, after he came into Galilee; the evangelist keeps a journal of occurrences, for no day passed without something extraordinary done or said. Our Master filled up his time better than his servants do, and never lay down at night complaining, as the Roman emperor did, that he had *lost a day*.

2. The place; it was at Cana in Galilee, in the tribe of Asher, *Josh. xix. 28.* of which before it was said, that *he shall yield royal dainties*, *Gen. xlix. 20.* Christ began to work miracles in an obscure corner of the country, remote from Jerusalem, which was the publick scene of action, to shew that he *sought not honour from men*, *John v. 41.* but would put honour *upon the lowly*. His doctrine and miracles would not be so much opposed by the plain, honest Galileans, as they would be by the proud and prejudiced rabbins, politicians, and grandees at Jerusalem.

3. The occasion itself was a *marriage*; probably one or both of the parties were a-kin to our Lord Jesus. The *mother of Jesus* is said to be *there*, and not to be *called*, as Jesus and his disciples were, which intimates that she was there as one at home. Observe the honour which Christ hereby put upon the ordinance of marriage, that he graced the solemnity of it, not only with his presence, but with the first miracle; because it was instituted and blessed in innocency; because by it he would still *seek a godly seed*; because it resembles the mystical union between him and his church, and because he foresaw that in the papal kingdom, while the marriage ceremony would be unduly dignified, and advanced into a *sacrament*, the *married state* would be unduly vilified, as inconsistent with any sacred function. There was a *marriage*, *γάμος*, a *marriage-feast*, to grace the solemnity, marriages were usually celebrated with festivals; *Gen. xxix. 22.* *Judg. xiv. 10.* in token of joy, and friendly respect, and for the confirming of love.

4. Christ and his mother and disciples were principal guests at this entertainment. The *mother of Jesus* (that was her most honourable title) *was there*; no mention being made of Joseph, we conclude him dead before this: Jesus was *called*, and he came, accepted the invitation, and feasted with them; to teach us to be *respectful* to our relations, and *sociable* with them; though they be mean. Christ was to come in a way different from that of John Baptist, who came *neither eating nor drinking*, *Matt. xi. 18, 19.* It is the wisdom of the prudent, to study how to *improve* conversation, rather than how to *decline* it.

There was a *marriage*, and *Jesus was called*. Note, 1. It is very desirable, when there is a *marriage*, to have Jesus Christ present at it; to have his spiritual, gracious presence, to have the marriage owned and blessed by him, the *marriage* is then *honourable* indeed: and they that *marry* in the Lord (*1 Cor. vii. 39.*) do not *marry without him*. 2. They that would have Christ

with them at their marriage, must invite him by prayer; that is the messenger that must be sent to heaven for him; and he will come, *thou shalt call, and I will answer*. And he will turn the water into wine.

The disciples also were invited; those five whom he had called, *chap. 1.* for as yet he had no more; they were his family, and were invited with him. They had thrown themselves upon his care, and they soon find, though he had no wealth, he had good friends. Note, (1.) Those that *follow* Christ shall *feast* with him, they shall *fare* as he *fares*, so he has *bespoke* for them, *John xii. 26.* *Where I am, there shall my servant be.* (2.) Love to Christ is testified by a love to those that are his for his sake; *our goodness extendeth not to him, but to the saints*. Calvin observes how *generous* the maker of the feast was, though he seems to be but of small substance, to invite four or five strangers more than he thought of, because they were followers of Christ, which shews (saith he) there is more of freedom and liberality, and true friendship, in the conversation of some meaner persons, than among many of higher rank.

Secondly, The miracle itself. In which observe,

1. They *wanted wine*, *ver. 3.* (1.) There was *want* at a *feast*; though much provided, yet all spent. While we are in this world, we sometimes find ourselves in *straits*, even then, when we think ourselves in the *fulness of our sufficiency*. If always *spending*, perhaps all is spent, ere we are aware. (2.) There was *want* at a *marriage-feast*. Note, They that being *married*, are come to *care for the things of the world*, must expect *trouble in the flesh*, and count upon disappointment. (3.) It should seem the occasion of this want was Christ and his disciples, being there were more company than they expected, when the provision was made; but they who straiten themselves for Christ, shall not lose by him.

2. The *mother of Jesus* solicited him to assist her friends in this strait. We are told, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* what passed between Christ and his mother upon this occasion.

1. She acquaints him with the plunge they were at, *ver. 3.* *She saith unto him, They have no wine.* Some think she did not expect from him any miraculous supply, he having as yet wrought no miracle, but that she would have him make some *decent excuse* to the company, and make the best of it to save the bridegroom's reputation, and keep him in countenance. Or, (as Calvin suggests) would have him make up the want of wine with some holy profitable discourse; but most probably she looked for a miracle; for she knew he was now appearing as the great prophet, like unto Moses, who so oft seasonably supplied the wants of Israel; and though this was his first publick miracle, perhaps he had sometimes relieved her and her husband in their low estate. The bridegroom might have sent out for more wine, but she was for going to the fountain head. Note, (1.) We ought to be concerned for the wants and straits of our friends, and not *seek our own things only*. (2.) In our own and our friends straits, it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to Christ by prayer. (3.) In our addresses to Christ, we must not prescribe to him, but humbly spread our case before him, and then *refer ourselves* to him to do as he pleaseth.

2. He gave her a reprimand for it, for he saw more amiss in it than we do, else he had not treated it thus.

Here is, 1. The rebuke itself, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* As many as Christ loves, he rebukes and chastens. He calls her *woman*, not *mother*; when we begin to be assuming, we should be minded what we are, *men and women*, frail, foolish, and corrupt. The question, *τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοὶ*, might be read, *what is that to me and thee?* what is it to us if they do want; but it is always used, as we render it, *What have I to do with thee?* as *Judg. xi. 12.* *2 Sam. xvi. 10.* *Ezra iv. 3.* *Matt. viii. 29.* And therefore speaks a resentment, yet not at all inconsistent with that reverence and subjection which he paid to his mother, according to the fifth commandment, *Luke ii. 51.* for there was a time when it was Levi's praise, that he *said to his father, I have not known him*, *Deut. xxxiii. 9.* Now this was intended to be, (1.) A check to his mother, for interposing in a matter, which was the act of his God-head, which had no dependence on her, and which she was not the mother of. Though as man, he was David's son, and her's; yet as God, he was David's Lord, and her's, and he would have her know it. The greatest advancements must not make us forget ourselves, and our place, nor the familiarity which the covenant of grace admits us to, breed contempt, irreverence, or any kind or degree of presumption. (2.) It was an instruction to others of his relations, many of whom were present here, that they must never expect him to have any regard to his kindred according to the flesh, in his working miracles, or that therein he should gratify them, who in this matter were no more to him than other people. In the things of God, we must not *know faces*. (3.) It is a standing testimony against that idolatry, which he foresaw his church would in after ages sink into, in giving undue honours to the virgin Mary; a crime which the Roman catholics, as they call themselves, are notoriously guilty of, when they call her the *queen of heaven*, the *salvation of the world*, their *mediatrix*, their *life*, and *hope*; not only depending upon her merit and intercession, but beseeching her to *command her Son* to do them good; *Monstra te esse matrem.—Jussu matris imperat*



*impera salvatori.* Doth he not here expressly say, when a miracle was to be wrought, even in the days of his humiliation, and his mother did but tacitly hint an intercession; *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* which was plainly designed either to prevent or aggravate such gross idolatry, such horrid blasphemy. The Son of God is appointed our advocate with the Father, but the mother of our Lord was never designed to be our advocate with the Son.

2. The reason of this rebuke; *Mine hour is not yet come*; for every thing Christ did, and that was done to him, he had *his hour*, the *fixed* time, and the *fittest* time, which was punctually observed. (1.) *Mine hour for working miracles* is not yet come, yet afterwards he wrought this, before the hour, because he foresaw it would confirm the faith of his infant disciples, *ver. 11.* which was the end of all his miracles: so that this was an earnest of the many miracles he would work when his *hour was come*. (2.) *Mine hour of working miracles openly* is not yet come, therefore do not talk of it thus *publickly*. (3.) *Is not the hour of my exemption from thine authority yet come*, now I have begun to act as a prophet? So Gregory Nyssen. (4.) *Mine hour for working this miracle* is not yet come. His mother moved him to help them *when the wine began to fail*, so it may be read, *ver. 2.* But his hour was not yet come, till it was quite spent, and there was a *total want*, not only to prevent any suspicion of mixing some of the wine that was lost with the water, but to teach us, that man's extremity is God's opportunity, to appear for the help and relief of his people. Then *his hour is come*, when we are reduced to the utmost strait, and know not what to do. This encouraged those that waited for him, to believe, that though his hour was not yet come, it would come. Note, The delays of mercy are not to be construed the denials of prayer. *At the end it shall speak.*

3. Notwithstanding this, she encouraged herself with expectation, that he would help her friends in this strait, for she bid the servants *observe his orders*, *ver. 5.*

1. She took the reproof very submissively, and did not reply to it. It is best not to deserve reproof from Christ, but next best to be meek and quiet under it, and to count it a kindness, *Psal. cxli. 5.*

2. She kept her hope in Christ's mercy, that he would yet grant her desire. When we come to God in Christ for any mercy, two things discourage us. (1.) Sense of *our own follies*, and infirmities; surely such imperfect prayers as ours cannot speed. (2.) Sense of *our Lord's frowns and rebukes*, afflictions are continued, deliverances delayed, and God seems angry at our prayers; this was the case of the mother of our Lord here, and yet she encourageth herself with hope, that he will at length give in an answer of peace; to teach us, to wrestle with God by faith and fervency in prayer, even then, when he seems in his providence to walk contrary to us. We must *against hope believe in hope*, *Rom. iv. 18.*

3. She directed the servants to have an eye to him immediately, and not to make their applications to her, as it is probable *they had done*. She quits all pretensions to an influence upon him, or intercession with him; let their souls wait only on him, *Psal. lxii. 5.*

4. She directed them punctually to observe his orders, without disputing or asking questions. Being conscious to herself of a fault in *prescribing* to him, she cautions the servants to take heed of the same fault, and to attend both his time and his way for supply; *Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it*, though you may think it never so improper. If he saith, Give the guests water when they call for wine, do it. If he saith, Pour out from the bottoms of the vessels that are spent, do it; He can make a few drops of wine multiply to so many draughts. Note, Those that expect Christ's favours, must with an implicit obedience observe his orders. The way of duty is the way to mercy; and Christ's methods must not be objected against.

4. Christ did at length miraculously supply them, for he is often better than his word, but never worse.

1. The miracle itself was *turning water into wine*. The substance of water acquiring a new form, and having all the accidents and qualities of wine: Such a transformation is a miracle. But the popish transubstantiation, the substance changed, but the accidents remaining the same, is a monster. By this Christ shewed himself to be the God of nature, who maketh the earth to bring forth wine, *Psal. civ. 14, 15.* The extracting the blood of the grape every year from the moisture of the earth, is no less a work of power, though being according to the common law of nature, it is not such a work of wonder as this. The beginning of Moses's miracles, was turning water into blood, *Exod. iv. 9.* chap. vii. 20. the beginning of Christ's miracles, was turning water into wine, which intimates the difference between the law of Moses, and the gospel of Christ. The curse of the law turns water into blood, common comforts into bitterness and terror; the blessing of the gospel turns water into wine; Christ hereby shewed, that his errand into the world, was to heighten and improve creature-comforts to all believers, and make them comforts indeed. Shiloh is said to *wash his garments in wine*, *Gen. xlix. 11.* the water for washing being turned into wine. And the gospel call is, *Come ye to the waters and buy wine*, *Isa. lv. 1.*

2. The circumstances of it magnified it, and freed it from all suspicion of cheat or collusion; for,

1. It was done in water-pots, *ver. 6.* *There were set there six water-pots of stone.* Observe, (1.) For what use these water-pots were intended; viz. for their legal purifications from ceremonial pollutions, enjoined by the law of God, and many more by the tradition of the elders; the *Jews eat not except they wash oft*, *Mark vii. 3.* and they used much water in their washing, for which reason here were six large water-pots provided. It was a saying among them, *Qui multâ utitur aquâ in lavando, multas consequetur in hoc mundo divitias.* (2.) To what use Christ put them, quite different from what they were intended; to be the receptacles of the miraculous wine. Thus Christ came to bring in the grace of the gospel, which is as *wine*, that cheareth God and man, *Judg. ix. 13.* Instead of the shadows of the law, which were as water, *weak, and beggarly elements.* These were *water-pots* that had never been used to have wine in them; and of *stone*, which is not apt to retain the scent of former liquors, if ever they had had wine in them. They contained *two or three firkins a-piece*; two or three measures, *baths, or ephabs*; the quantity is uncertain, but very considerable. We may be sure it was not intended to be all drunk at this feast, but for a further kindness to the new-married-couple, as the multiplied oil was to the poor widow, out of which she might *pay her debt, and live of the rest*, *2 Kings iv. 7.* Christ gives like himself; gives abundantly, according to his riches in glory. It is the pen-man's language to say, they contained *two or three firkins*, for the holy Spirit could have ascertained just how much; thus *John vi. 19.* to teach us to speak cautiously, and not confidently of those things whereof we have not good assurance.

2. The water-pots were filled up to the brim by the servants, at Christ's word, *ver. 7.* As Moses, the servant of the Lord, when God bid him, went to the rock to draw water; so these servants, when Christ bade them, went to the water to fetch wine. Note, Since no difficulties can be opposed to the arm of God's power, no improbabilities are to be objected against the word of his command.

3. The miracle was wrought suddenly, and in such a manner, as greatly magnified it. As soon as they had filled the water-pots, presently he said, *Draw out now*, *ver. 8.* it was done.

(1.) Without any ceremony in the eye of the spectators. One would have thought as Naaman, he should have come out and stood, and called on the name of God, *2 Kings v. 11.* No, he sits still in his place, saith not a word, but *wills* the thing, and so works it. Note, Christ doth great things, and marvellous, *without noise*, works manifest changes in a hidden way. Sometimes Christ, in working miracles, used words and signs, but it was *for their sakes that stood by*, *John xi. 47.*

(2.) Without any hesitation or uncertainty in his own breast. He did not say, *Draw out now*, and let me taste it, questioning whether the thing were done as he willed it or no; but with the greatest assurance imaginable, though it was his *first miracle*, he recommends it to the master of the feast *first*. As he knew what he would do, so he knew what he could do, and made no essay in his work; but all good, very good, even in the beginning.

Our Lord Jesus directed the servants,

1. To draw it out; not let it alone in the vessel to be admired, but draw it out to be drunk. Note, (1.) Christ's works are all for use; he gives no man a talent to be buried, but to be traded with. Has he turned thy water into wine, given thee knowledge and grace? it is to profit withal, and therefore, *draw out now*. 2. Those that would know Christ, must make trial of him; must attend upon him in the use of ordinary means, and then may expect extraordinary influences. That which is laid up, for all that fear God is wrought for those that trust in him, *Psal. xxxiii. 19.* that, by the exercise of faith, draw out what is laid up.

2. To present it to the governour of the feast. Some think, this governour of the feast was only the chief guest, that sat at the upper end of the table; and if so, sure our Lord Jesus should have had that place, for he was upon all accounts the principal guest; but it seems another had the uppermost room, probably one that loved it, *Matt. xxiii. 6.* and chose it, *Luke xiv. 7.* And Christ, according to his own rule, sat down in the lowest room; but though he was not treated as the master of the feast, he kindly approved himself a friend to the feast, and if not its founder, yet its best benefactor. Others think this governour was the inspector and monitor of the feast. The same with Plutarch's *Sympsiarcha*, whose office it was to see that each had enough, and none did exceed, and that there were no indecencies, or disorders. Note, Feasts have need of governours, because too many, when they are at feasts, have not the government of themselves. Some think this governour was the chaplain, some priest or Levite that craved a blessing, and gave thanks, and Christ would have the cup brought to him, that he might bless it, and bless God for it; for the extraordinary tokens of Christ's presence and power were not to supersede or juggle out the ordinary rules and methods of piety and devotion.

4. The wine which was thus miraculously provided, was of the best and richest wine, which was acknowledged by the governours



governour of the feast; and that it was really so, and not his fancy, is certain, because he knew not whence it was, *ver. 9, 10.* (1.) It was certain this was *wine*. The *governour* knew that when he drank it, though he knew not *whence it was*; the servants knew whence it was, but had not yet tasted it. If the taster had seen the drawing of it, or the drawers had had the tasting of it, something might have been imputed to fancy; but now no room is left for suspicion. (2.) That it was the best wine. Note, Christ's works commend themselves, even to those that know not their author. The products of miracles were always the best in their kind. This wine had a *stronger body*, and *better flavour* than ordinary. This the governour of the feast takes notice of to the bridegroom, with an air of pleasantness, as *uncommon*. (1.) The common method was otherwise. Good wine is brought out to the best advantage at the beginning of a feast, when the guests have their heads clear, and their appetites fresh, and can relish it, and will commend it; but *when they have well drunk*, when their heads are muddy, and their appetites palled, good wine is but thrown away upon them, worse will serve then: See the vanity of all the pleasures of sense, they soon surfeit, but never satisfy; the longer they are enjoyed, the less pleasant they grow. (2.) This bridegroom obliged his friends with a reserve of the best wine for the grace-cup. *Thou hast kept the good wine until now*; not knowing whom they were indebted to for this good wine, he returns the thanks of the table to the bridegroom. *She did not know that I gave her corn and wine*, Hof. ii. 8.

Now, 1. Christ, in providing thus plentifully for the guests, though he hereby allows a sober, chearful use of wine, especially in times of rejoicing, *Neh. viii. 10.* yet he doth not invalidate his own caution, nor invade it in the least, which is, that our hearts be not *at any time*, no not at a marriage feast, *over-charged with surfeiting and drunkenness*, Luke xxi. 34. When Christ provided so much *good wine* for them that had *well drunk*, he intended to try their sobriety, and to teach them *how to abound*, as well as *how to want*. Temperance *per force*, is a thankless virtue, but if divine providence give us abundance of the delights of sense, and divine grace enable us to use them moderately, this is self-denial that is praise-worthy. He also intended that some should be left for the confirmation of the truth of the miracle to the faith of others. And we have reason to think that the guests at this table were so well *taught*, or at least were now so well awed by the presence of Christ, that none of them abused this wine to excess. And those two considerations drawn from this story, may be sufficient at any time to fortify us against temptations to intemperance. (1.) That our meat and drink are the *gifts of God's bounty* to us, and we owe our liberty to use them, and our comfort in the use of them, to the mediation of Christ, it is therefore ungrateful and impious to abuse them. (2.) That wherever we are, Christ has his eye upon us; we should *eat bread before God*, *Exod. xviii. 12.* and then we should not *feed ourselves without fear*.

2. He hath given us a specimen of the method he takes in dealing with those that deal with him, which is to reserve the *best* for the *last*, and therefore they must *deal upon trust*. The recompence of their services and sufferings is reserved for the other world; it is a *glory to be revealed*. The pleasures of sin give their colour in the cup, but *at the last bite*; but the pleasures of religion will be *pleasures for evermore*.

In the conclusion of this story, *ver. 11.* we are told,

1. That this was *the beginning of miracles* which Jesus did. Many miracles had been wrought *concerning* him at his birth, and baptism, and he himself was the greatest miracle of all; but this was the first that was wrought *by* him. He could have wrought miracles when he disputed with the doctors, but his hour was not come. He had power, but there was a *time of the hiding of his power*.

2. That herein he *manifested his glory*; hereby he proved himself to be the Son of God, and his glory to be that of the only begotten of the Father. He also discovered the nature and end of his office; the power of a God, and the grace of a Saviour appearing in all his miracles, and particularly in this, manifested the glory of the long expected Messiah.

3. That *his disciples believed on him*. Those whom he had called, *chap. i.* who had seen no miracle, and yet followed him, now saw this, shared in it, and had their faith strengthened by it. Note, 1. Even the faith that is true at first is but weak. The strongest men were once babes, so were the strongest Christians. 2. The manifesting of the glory of Christ is the great confirmation of the faith of Christians.

12. ¶ After this, he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples, and they continued there not many days. 13. ¶ And the Jews passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, 14. And found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting: 15. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured

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out the changers money, and over-threw the tables; 16. And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandize. 17. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. 18. ¶ Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou dost these things? 19. Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. 20. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? 21. But he spake of the temple of his body. 22. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them: and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

Here we have,

First, The short visit Christ made to Capernaum, *ver. 12.* It was a large and populous city, about a day's journey from Cana; it is called *his own city*, *Matt. ix. 1.* because he made it his head quarters in Galilee, and what little rest he had was there. It was a place of concourse, and therefore Christ chose it, that the fame of his doctrine and miracles might from thence spread the further. Observe,

1. The company that attended him thither. *His mother, his brethren, and his disciples*. Wherever Christ went, 1. He *would not* go alone, but would take those with him who had put themselves under his conduct, that he might instruct them, and they might attest his miracles. 2. He *should not* go alone, but they would follow him, because they liked the sweetness either of his doctrine, or of his wine, *John vi. 26.* His mother, though he had lately given her to understand, that in the works of his ministry he should pay no more respect to her than to any other person, yet followed him; not to intercede with him, but to learn of him. His *brethren* also, and relations, that were at the marriage, and were wrought upon by the miracle there; and *his disciples*, who attended him wherever he went. It should seem, people were more affected with Christ's miracles at first, than they were afterwards, when custom made them seem less strange.

2. His continuance there, which was at this time, *not many days*, designing now only to *begin* the acquaintance, he would afterwards *improve* there. Christ was still upon the remove, would not confine his usefulness to *one* place, because *many* needed him. And he would teach his followers to look upon themselves but as *sojourners* in this world; and his ministers to follow their opportunities, and go where their work led them. We do not now find Christ in the synagogues, but he privately instructed his friends, and thus entered upon his work *by degrees*: It is good for young ministers to accustom themselves to pious and edifying discourse in private, that they may with the better preparation and greater awe approach their publick work. He did not stay long at Capernaum, because the passover was at hand, and he must attend it at Jerusalem, for every thing is beautiful in its season. The less good must give way to the greater; and all the dwellings of Jacob must veil to the gates of Zion.

Secondly, The passover he kept at Jerusalem; it is the *first* after his baptism, and the evangelist takes notice of all the passovers he kept henceforward, which were four in all, the *fourth*, that at which he suffered; three years after this, and half a year, was now past since his baptism. Christ being *made under the law*, observed the passover at Jerusalem; see *Exod. xxiii. 17.* Thus he taught us by his example a strict observance of divine institutions, and a diligent attendance on religious assemblies. He went up to Jerusalem when *the passover was at hand*, that he might be there *with the first*. It is called *the Jews passover*, because it was peculiar to them (Christ is *our* passover) now shortly God will no longer own it for his. Christ kept the passover at Jerusalem yearly, ever since he was twelve years old, in obedience to the law; but now he is entered upon his publick ministry, we may expect something more from him than before; and two things we are here told he did there.

1. He *purged the temple*, *ver. 14—17.* Observe here,

1. The first place we find him in at Jerusalem, was the *temple*, and it should seem he did not make any publick appearance till he came thither; for his presence and preaching there, was that glory of the latter house, which was to *exceed the glory of the former*, *Hag. ii. 9.* It was foretold, *Mal. iii. 1.* *I will send my messenger*, John Baptist; he never preached in the temple, but *the Lord, whom ye seek*, he shall suddenly come to his temple, suddenly after the appearing of John Baptist; so that this was the time, and the temple the place, when and where the Messiah was to be expected.

2. The first work we find him at in the temple, was the *purging* of it, for so it was foretold there, *Mal. iii. 2, 3.* *He shall sit as a refiner, and purify the sons of Levi*. Now was come the *time of reformation*, Christ came to be the great reformer; and



and according to the method of the reforming kings of Judah, he first *purged out* what was amiss, (and that used to be passover work too, as in Hezekiah's time, 2 *Chron.* xxx. 14, 15. and Josiah's, 2 *Kings* xxiii. 4, &c.) and then taught them to do well; first *purge out the old leaven*, and then *keep the feast*. Christ's design in coming into the world, was to reform the world, and he expects that all who come to him, should reform their hearts and lives, *Gen.* xxxv. 2. And this he has taught us by purging the temple.

See here, 1. What were the corruptions that were to be purged out. He found a market in one of the courts of the temple, that which was called, the *court of the Gentiles*, within the *mountain of that house*. There, (1.) They sold *oxen, and sheep, and doves*, for sacrifice, we will suppose not for common use, but for the convenience of those who came out of the country, and could not bring their sacrifices *in specie* along with them, see *Deut.* xiv. 24, 25, 26. This market perhaps had been kept by the pool of Bethesda, *chap.* v. 2. But was admitted into the temple by the chief priests, for filthy lucre, for, no doubt, the rents for standing there, and fees for searching the beasts sold there, and certifying that they were *without blemish*, would be a considerable revenue to them. Great corruptions in the church owe their rise to the love of money, 1 *Tim.* vi. 5, 10. (2.) They *changed money*, for the convenience of those that were to pay a half-shekel *in specie* every year, by way of poll, for the service of the tabernacle, *Exod.* xxx. 12. and no doubt they got by it.

2. What course our Lord took to purge out those corruptions. He had seen these in the temple formerly, when he was in a private station, but never went about to drive them out till now, when he had taken upon him the publick character of a prophet. He did not complain to the chief priests, for he knew they countenanced those corruptions. But he himself,

1. *Drove out the sheep and oxen*, and those that *sold them*, out of the temple. He never used *force* to drive any *into* the temple, but only to drive those out that profaned it: He did not seize the sheep and oxen for himself, did not *distrain* and impound them, though he found them *damage faissant*, actual trespassers upon his Father's ground, but only drove them out, and their owners with them. He made a scourge of *small cords*, which probably they had led their sheep and oxen with, and thrown them away upon the ground, thence Christ gathered them. Sinners prepare the scourges, with which they themselves will be driven out from the temple of the Lord. He did not make a scourge to chastise the offenders, his punishments are of another nature, but only to drive out the cattle; he aimed no further than at reformation. See *Rom.* xii. 3, 4. 2 *Cor.* x. 8.

2. He *poured out the changers money*, τὸ κέρμα. The *small money*. The *Nummorum Famulus*. In *pouring out* the money, he shewed his contempt of it, he threw it to the ground, to the earth as it was. In *overthrowing* the tables, he shewed his displeasure against those that make religion a matter of worldly gain. Money-changers in the temple are the scandal of it. Note, In reformation it is good to make thorough work; he *drove them all out*; and not only threw out the money, but in over-turning the tables, threw out the trade too.

3. He *said to them that sold doves* (sacrifices for the poor) *take these things hence*. The doves, though they took up less room, and were a less nuisance than the oxen and sheep, yet must not be allowed there. The sparrows and swallows were welcome that were left to God's providence, *Psal.* lxxxiv. 3. but not the doves that were appropriated to man's profit. God's temple must not be made a pigeon-house. But see Christ's prudence in his zeal. When he drove out the sheep and oxen, the owners might follow them; when he poured out the money, they might gather it up again; but if he had turned the doves flying, perhaps they could not have been retrieved; therefore to them that sold doves, he said, *take these things hence*. Note, Discretion must always guide and govern our zeal, that we do nothing unbecoming our selves, or mischievous to others.

4. He gave them a good reason for what he did, *Make not my Father's house a house of merchandize*. Reason for conviction should accompany force for correction.

1. Here is a reason why they should not profane the temple; because it was the *house of God*, and not to be made a house of merchandize. Merchandize is a good thing in the exchange, but not in the temple. This was, (1.) To *alienate* that which was dedicated to the honour of God; it was *sacrilege*; it was robbing God. (2.) It was to debase that which was solemn and awful, and to make it mean. (3.) It was to disturb and distract those services, in which men ought to be most solemn, serious, and intent. It was particularly an affront to the *sons of the stranger* in their worship to be forced to herd themselves with the sheep and oxen, and to be distracted in their worship by the noise of a market, for this market was kept in the court of the Gentiles. (4.) It was to make the business of religion subservient to a secular interest; for the holiness of the place must advance the market, and promote the sale of their commodities. Those make God's house a house of merchandize, (1.) Whose minds are filled with cares about worldly business, when they are attending on religious exercises, as those, *Amos* viii. 5. *Ezek.* xxxiii. 31. (2.) Who per-

form divine offices for filthy lucre, and sell the gifts of the Holy Ghost; *Acts* viii. 18.

2. Here is a reason why he was concerned to purge it; because it is *my Father's house*. And, (1.) Therefore he had authority to purge it, for he was faithful as a son *over his own house*, *Heb.* iii. 5, 6. In calling God his father, he intimates that he was the Messiah, of whom it was said, *He shall build a house for my name, and I will be his father*, 2 *Sam.* vii. 12, 13. (2.) Therefore he had a zeal for the purging of it. It is *my Father's house*, and therefore I cannot bear to see it profaned, and *him* dishonoured. Note, If God be our father in heaven, and it be therefore our desire, that his name may be sanctified, it cannot but be our grief to see it polluted.

Christ's purging the temple thus, may justly be reckoned among his *wonderful works*; *Inter omnia signa quæ fecit Dominus, hoc mihi videtur esse mirabilis*. Hieron. Considering, 1. That he did it without the *assistance* of any of his *friends*; probably it had been no hard matter to have raised the *mob*, who had a great veneration for the temple, against these profaners of it, but Christ never countenanced any thing that was tumultuous or disorderly. There was none to *uphold*, but his own arm did it. 2. That he did it without the *resistance* of any of his *enemies*, either the market people themselves, or the chief priests that gave them their licences, and had the *Posse Templi* at their command. But the corruption was too plain to be justified; sinners own consciences are reformers best friends; yet that was not all, there was a divine power put forth herein, a power over the spirits of men; and in this non-resistance of theirs, that scripture was fulfilled, *Mal.* iii. 2, 3. *Who shall stand, when he appears?*

Lastly, Here is the remark which his disciples made upon it, *ver.* 17. *They remembered that it was written, the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*. They were somewhat surprized at first, to see him whom they were directed to as the *Lamb of God* in such a heat; and him whom they believed to be the *king of Israel*, take so little state upon him as to do this himself; but one scripture came to their thoughts, which taught them to reconcile this action both with the meekness of the *Lamb of God*, and with the majesty of the *King of Israel*, for David speaking of the Messiah, takes notice of his *zeal for God's house*, as so great, that it even *eat him up*, it made him forget himself, *Psal.* lxxix. 9. Observe,

1. The disciples came to understand the meaning of what Christ did, by remembering the scriptures. *They remembered now that it was written*. Note, The word of God, and the works of God do mutually explain and illustrate each other. Dark scriptures are expounded by their accomplishment in providence, and difficult providences are made easy by comparing them with the scriptures. See of what great use it is to the disciples of Christ, to be *ready and mighty* in the scriptures, and to have their memories well stored with scripture truths, by which they will be *furnished for every good work*.

2. The scripture they remembered was very apposite; *the zeal of thine house has eaten me up*. David was in this a type of Christ, that he was *zealous for God's house*, *Psal.* cxxxii. 2, 3. What he did for it was *with all his might*; see 1 *Chron.* xxix. 2. the latter part of that verse, *Psal.* lxxix. 9. is applied to Christ, *Rom.* xv. 3. as the former part of it here. All the graces that were to be found among the Old Testament saints, were eminently in Christ, and particularly this of zeal for the house of God, and in them as they were patterns to us, so they were types of him. Observe, 1. Jesus Christ was zealously affected to the house of God, his church, loved it, and was always jealous for its honour and welfare. 2. This zeal did even *eat him up*; it made him *bumble himself*, and *spend himself*, and *expose himself*. *My zeal has consumed me*, *Psal.* cxix. 139. Zeal for the house of God forbids us to consult our own credit, ease and safety, when they come in competition with our duty and Christ's service, and sometimes carries on our souls in our duty so far, and so fast, that our bodies cannot keep pace with them, and makes us as deaf as our Master was to those who suggest, *spare thy self*. The grievances here redressed might seem but small, and such as should have been connived at; but such was Christ's zeal, that he could not bear even *them that sold and bought in the temple*; *Si ibi ebrios inveniret quid faceret Dominus*, saith St. Austin: If he had found drunkards in the temple, how much more would he have been displeased?

3. Christ having thus purged the temple, gave a sign to those who demanded it, to prove his authority for so doing. Observe here,

1. Their demand of a sign. *Then answered the Jews*, i. e. the multitude of the people, with their leaders. Being Jews, they should rather have stood by him, and assisted him to vindicate the honour of their temple; but instead of that, they objected against it. Note, They who apply themselves in good earnest to the work of reformation, must expect to meet with opposition. And when they could object nothing against the thing it self, they questioned his authority to do it, *What sign shewest thou unto us*, to prove thy self authorized and commissioned to do these things? It was indeed a good work to purge the temple; but what had he to do to undertake it, who was in no office there? They looked upon it as an act of jurisdiction, and that he must prove himself *a prophet, yea more than a prophet*. But was not the thing it self



sign enough? His ability to drive so many from their posts without opposition, was a proof of his authority; he that was armed with such a divine power, sure was armed with a divine commission. *What ailed these buyers and sellers that they fled? that they were driven back?* Surely it was *at the presence of the Lord*, Plal. cxiv. 5, 7. no less a presence.

2. Christ's answer to this demand, *ver. 19*. He did not immediately work a miracle to convince them, but gives them a sign in something *to come*, the truth of which must appear by the event, according to *Deut. xviii. 21*.

Now, 1. The sign that he gives them is, his own *death and resurrection*. He refers them to that which would be, (1.) His *last sign*. If they would not be convinced by what they saw and heard, let them *wait*. (2.) The *great sign* to prove him to be the Messiah; for, concerning him, it was foretold that he should be bruised, *Isa. liii. 5. cut off*, *Dan. ix. 26*. and yet that he should not see corruption, *Psal. xvi. 10*. These things were fulfilled in the blessed Jesus, and therefore, *truly he was the Son of God*, and had authority in the temple, his Father's house.

2. He foretels his death and resurrection not in plain terms, as he often did to his disciples, but in figurative expressions; as afterwards when he gave this for a sign, he called it the *sign of the prophet Jonas*; so here, *destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*. Thus spake he to them, who were willingly ignorant, in parables, that *they might not perceive*, *Matt. xiii. 13*. They that will not see, shall not see. Nay, this figurative speech used here, proved such a *stumbling-block* to them, that it was produced in evidence against him at his trial, to prove him a blasphemer, *Mat. xxvi. 60, 61*. Had they humbly asked him the meaning of what he said, he would have told them, and it had been a favour of life unto life to them, but they were resolved to cavil, and it proved a favour of death unto death. They that would not be convinced were hardened, and the manner of expression of this prediction occasioned the accomplishment of the prediction it self.

(1.) He foretels his death by the Jews malice, in these words, *destroy ye this temple*, i. e. ye will will destroy it, I know ye will. I will permit you to destroy it. Note, Christ even at the beginning of his ministry, had a clear foresight of all his sufferings at the end of it, and yet went on cheerfully in it. It is good at *sitting out* to expect the worst.

(2.) He foretels his resurrection by his own power, in *three days I will raise it up*. There were others that *were raised*, but Christ raised himself, resumed his own life.

Now he chose to express this by *destroying*, and *re-edifying* the temple; (1.) Because he was now to justify himself in purging the temple, which they had profaned, *q. d.* you that defile one temple will destroy another, and I will prove my authority to *purge* what you have defiled, by *raising* what you will *destroy*. The profaning of the temple is the *destroying* of it, and its reformation its *resurrection*. (2.) Because the death of Christ was indeed the destruction of the Jewish temple, the procuring cause of it; and his resurrection was the raising up of another temple, the gospel church, *Zech. vi. 12*. The ruins of their *place* and nation, *John 11. 48*. were the riches of the world. See *Amos ix. 11. Acts xv. 16*.

3. Their cavil at this answer, *ver. 20*. *Forty and six years was this temple in building*, temple-work was always slow work, and canst thou make such quick work of it? Now here, (1.) They shew *some knowledge*, they could tell how long the temple was in building. Dr. Lightfoot computes that it was just 46 years from the founding of Zerubbabel's temple, in the second year of Cyrus, to the complete settlement of the temple service, in the 32d year of Artaxerxes; and also, that from Herod's beginning to build his temple, in the 18th year of his reign, to this very time, when the Jews said this was just 46 years; forty and six years *κατασκευασθη, hath this temple been built*. (2.) They shew *more ignorance*, (1.) Of the meaning of Christ's words. Note, Men oft run into gross mistakes, by understanding that literally, which the scripture speaks figuratively; what abundance of mischief has been done, by interpreting, *this is my body*, after a corporal and carnal manner. (2.) Of the *almighty power of Christ*, as if he could do no more than another man. Had they known that this was he who *built all things* in six days, they would not have made it such an absurdity, that he should build a temple in three days.

4. A vindication of Christ's answer from their cavil. The difficulty is soon solved by explaining the terms; *he spake of the temple of his body*, *ver. 21*. Though Christ had discovered a great respect for the temple in *purging* it, yet he will have us now, that the holiness of it, which he was so jealous for, was but *typical*, and leads us to the consideration of another temple, which that was but a shadow of, the substance being Christ, *Heb. 9. Col. ii. 17*. Some think, when he said, *destroy this temple*, he pointed to his own body, or laid his hand upon it; however, it is certain he *spake of the temple of his body*. Note, The body of Christ is the true temple, of which that at Jerusalem was a type. (1.) Like the temple, it was built by immediate divine erection, a body *hast thou prepared me*, *1 Chron. xxviii. 19*. (2.) Like the temple, it was a *holy house*, it is called *that holy house*. (3.) It was like the temple, the habitation of God's glory; the eternal Word dwelt, the true Shechinah. He is

Emanuel, God with us. (4.) The temple was the place and medium of intercourse between God and Israel; there God revealed himself to them, there they presented themselves and their services to him. Thus by Christ God speaks to us, and we speak to him. Worshipers looked *towards* that house, *1 Kings viii. 30, 35*. So we must worship God with an eye to Christ.

5. A reflexion which the disciples made upon this long after, inserted here to illustrate the story, *ver. 22*. *When he was risen from the dead*, some years after, *his disciples remembered that he had said this*. We found them, *ver. 17*. remembering what had been written before of him, and here remembering what they had heard from him. Note, The memories of Christ's disciples should be like the treasure of the good householder, furnished with things both *new and old*, *Matt. xiii. 52*. Now observe,

1. *When they remembered that saying; when he was risen from the dead*. It seems they did not at this time fully understand Christ's meaning, for they were as yet but babes in knowledge, but they laid it up in their hearts, and afterwards it became both intelligible and useful. Note, It is good to *bear for the time to come*, *Isa. xlii. 23*. The juniors in years and profession should treasure up those truths, which at present they do not well understand either the meaning or use of, for they will be serviceable to them hereafter, when they come to greater proficiency. It was said of the scholars of Pythagoras, that his precepts seemed to freeze in them till they were 40 years old, and then they began to thaw; so this saying of Christ revived in the memories of his disciples, *when he was risen from the dead*; and why then? (1.) Because *then* the Spirit was poured out to bring things to their remembrance, which Christ had said to them, and to make them both *easy and ready* to them, *John xiv. 26*. That very day that Christ rose from the dead, he *opened their understandings*, *Luke xxiv. 45*. (2.) Because then this saying of Christ was fulfilled, when the temple of his body had been *destroyed*, and was *raised again*, and that upon the *third day*, then they remembered this among other words Christ had said to this purpose. Note, It contributes much to the understanding of the scripture, to observe the fulfilling of the scripture. The event will expound the prophecy.

2. What use they made of it. *They believed the scripture, and the word that Jesus had said*; i. e. their belief of these was confirmed, and received fresh support and vigour. They were slow of heart to believe, *Luke xxiv. 25*. but they were *sure*. The *scripture*, and the *word of Christ* are here put together, not because they concur, and exactly agree together, but because they mutually illustrate and strengthen each other. When the disciples saw both what they had read in the Old Testament, and what they had heard from Christ's own mouth, fulfilled in his death and resurrection, they were the more confirmed in their belief of both.

23. ¶ Now when he was at Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. 24. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, 25. And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

We have here an account of the success, the poor success of Christ's preaching and miracles at Jerusalem, while he kept the passover there. Observe,

1. That our Lord Jesus, when he was at Jerusalem, at the passover, did preach, and work miracles. Peoples *believing on him*, implied that he preached, and it is expressly said, they *saw the miracles he did*. He was now in Jerusalem, the holy city whence the *word of the Lord* was to go forth; his residence was mostly in Galilee, and therefore when he was *in Jerusalem*, he was very busy. The time was holy time, the *feast-day*, time appointed for the service of God; at the passover the *Levites taught the good knowledge of the Lord*, *2 Chron. xxx. 22*. and Christ took that opportunity of preaching, when the concourse of people was great, and thus he would own and honour the divine institution of the passover.

2. That hereby many were brought to *believe in his name*, to acknowledge him a *teacher come from God*, as Nicodemus did, *chap. iii. 2*. a great prophet, and probably some of those who *looked for redemption in Jerusalem*, believed him to be the Messiah promised, so ready were they to welcome the first appearance of that *bright and morning star*.

3. That yet *Jesus did not commit himself unto them*, *ver. 24*. *ἐκ ἐπίσεως ἑαυτὸν ἀνθρώποις*. He did not *trust* himself with them. It is the same word that is used for *believing* in him. So that to believe in Christ, is to *commit our selves* to him, and to his conduct. Christ did not see cause to repose any confidence in these new converts at Jerusalem, where he had many enemies, that sought to destroy him; either, (1.) Because they were *false*, at least some of them, and would betray him if they had an opportunity, or were strongly tempted to it. He had more disciples that he could trust among the Galileans, than among the dwellers



at Jerusalem. In dangerous times and places, it is wisdom to take heed who you confide in, *μὴ μνησθὲν ἀπιστεῖν*, *Learn to distrust*. Or, (2.) Because they were *weak*, and I would hope that this was the worst of it; not that they were *treacherous*, and designed him a mischief; but, (1.) They were *timorous*, and wanted zeal and courage, and might perhaps be frightened to do an ill thing. In times of difficulty and danger, cowards are not fit to be trusted. Or, (2.) They were *tumultuous*, and wanted discretion and conduct. These in Jerusalem perhaps had their expectations more raised than others of the *temporal* reign of the Messiah, and in that expectation would be ready to give some bold strokes at the government, if Christ would have *committed himself to them*, and put himself at the head of them; but he would not, for his kingdom is not of this world. We should be shy of turbulent, unquiet people, as our Master here was, though they profess to *believe in Christ*, as these did.

4. That the reason why he did not *commit himself to them*, was, because he *knew* them, *ver. 25.* knew the wickedness of some, and weakness of others. The evangelist takes this occasion to assert Christ's omniscience.

1. He *knew all men*, not only their names and faces, as it is possible for us to know many, but their nature, dispositions, affections, designs, so as we do not know *any man*, scarce *ourselves*. He knows *all men*, for his powerful hand made them all, his piercing eye sees them all, sees into them. He knows his *subtle enemies*, and all their secret projects; his *false friends*, and their true characters; what they really are, whatever they pretend to be. He knows them that are truly his, knows their integrity, and knows their infirmity too. He *knows their frame*.

2. He *needed not that any should testify of man*. His knowledge was not by information from others, but by his own infallible intuition. It is the infelicity of earthly princes, that they must see with other men's eyes, and hear with other men's ears, and take things as they are represented to them; but Christ goes purely upon his own knowledge. Angels are his messengers, but not his spies, for *his own eyes run to and fro through the earth*, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. This may comfort us in reference to Satan's accusations, that Christ will not take men's characters from him.

3. He *knew what was in man*; in particular persons, in the nature and race of man. We know what is done *by men*, Christ knows what is *in them*, *tries the heart and the reins*. This is the prerogative of that essential eternal Word, Heb. iv. 12, 13. We invade his prerogative, if we presume to judge men's hearts. How fit is Christ to be the *Saviour of men*, very fit to be the physician, who hath such a perfect knowledge of the patient's state and case, temper, and distemper; knows what is in him. How fit also to be the *judge of all*, for the judgment of him who knows *all men*, all in men must needs be *according to truth*.

Now this is all the success of Christ's preaching and miracles at Jerusalem, in this journey. The Lord comes to his temple, and none come to him, but a parcel of weak, simple people, that he can neither have *credit* from, nor put *confidence* in; yet he shall at length see of the travel of his soul.

## C H A P. III.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Christ's discourse with Nicodemus, a Pharisee, concerning the great mysteries of the gospel, which he here privately lets him into, *ver. 1—21.* (2.) John Baptist's discourse with his disciples concerning Christ, upon occasion of his coming into the neighbourhood where he was, *ver. 22—36.* in which he fairly and faithfully resigns all his honour and interest to him.

1. **T**HERE was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5. Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. 7. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh,

and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. 9. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10. Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? 11. Verily, verily I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. 12. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? 13. And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. 14. ¶ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16. ¶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18. ¶ He that believeth on him, is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20. For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

We found in the close of the foregoing chapter, that few were brought to Christ at Jerusalem; yet here was *one*, a considerable one; it is worth while to go a great way for the salvation, though but of *one soul*. Observe,

1. Who this Nicodemus was. Not many mighty and noble are called, yet some are, and here was one. *Not many* of the rulers, or of the Pharisees; yet, (1.) This was a *man of the Pharisees*, bred to learning, a scholar; let it not be said, that all Christ's followers are *unlearned, and ignorant men*. The principles of the Pharisees, and the peculiarities of their sect, were directly contrary to the spirit of Christianity, yet there were some, in whom even those high thoughts were cast down, and brought into obedience to Christ. The grace of Christ is able to subdue the greatest opposition. (2.) He was a *ruler of the Jews*, a member of the great Sanhedrin, a senator, a privy-counsellor, a man of authority in Jerusalem. As bad as things were, there were some rulers *well inclined*, who yet could do little good, because the stream was so strong against them; they were over-ruled by the majority, and yoked with those that were corrupt, so that the good which they would do, they could not do it; yet Nicodemus continued in his place, and did what he could, when he could not do what he would.

2. His solemn address to our Lord Jesus Christ, *ver. 2.* See here,

1. When he came. *He came to Jesus by night*. Observe, 1. He made a private and particular address to Christ, and did not think it enough to hear his publick discourses. He resolved to talk with him by himself, where he might be free with him. Personal converse with skilful, faithful ministers about the affairs of our souls would be of great use to us, *Mal. ii. 7.*

2. He made this address *by night*, which may be considered, either, (1.) As an act of *prudence and discretion*. Christ was engaged all day in *publick* work, and he would not interrupt him then; nor expect his attendance then, but observed *Christ's hour*, and waited on him when he was *at leisure*. Note, Private advantages to our selves and our own families, must give way to those that are publick, and of more general use. The greater good must be preferred before the less. Christ had many enemies, and therefore Nicodemus came *incognito* to him, lest if the chief priests had known it, they should have been the more enraged against Christ. (2.) As an act of *zeal and forwardness*. Nicodemus was a man of business, and could not spare time all day to make Christ a visit, and therefore he would rather take time from the diversions of the *evening*, or the rest of the *night*, than not converse with Christ. When others were sleeping he was getting knowledge, as David by meditation, *Psal. lxxiii. 6.* and *cxix. 148*. Probably it was the very next night after he saw Christ's miracles, and he would not slip the first opportunity of pursuing his convictions. He knew not how soon Christ might leave the town, nor what might happen betwixt and another feast, and therefore would lose no time. In the night his converse with Christ would be more free, and less liable to disturbance. These were *Noctes Christianæ*, much more instructive than the *Noctes Atticæ*. Or, (3.) As an act of *fear and cowardise*. He was afraid or ashamed to be *seen* with Christ; and therefore came



in the night. When religion is out of fashion, there are many Nicodemites, especially among the rulers, who have a better affection to Christ and his religion than they would be known to have. But observe, (1.) Though he came by night Christ bid him welcome, accepted his integrity, and pardoned his infirmity; considered his temper, which perhaps was timorous, and the temptation he was in from his place and office; and hereby taught his ministers to become all things to all men, and to encourage good beginnings though they are weak. *Paul preached privately to them of reputation*, Gal. ii. 2. (2.) Though now he came by night, yet afterward, when there was occasion, he owned Christ publicly, John vii. 50. — xix. 39. The grace which is at first but a grain of mustard-seed may grow to be a great tree.

2. What he said. He did not come to talk with Christ about politicks, and state-affairs, though he was a ruler, but about the concern of his own soul, and its salvation, and without circumlocutions comes presently to the business; he calls Christ *Rabbi*, which signifies a great man; see *Isa. xix. 20. He shall send them a Saviour, and a great one; a Saviour and a Rabbi*, so the word is. There are hopes of those who have a respect for Christ, and think and speak honourably of him. He tells Christ how far he had attained; we know that thou art a teacher. Observe,

1. His assertion concerning Christ: *Thou art a teacher come from God*; not educated or ordained by men, as other teachers, but supported with divine inspiration, and divine authority. He that was to be the sovereign ruler came first to be a teacher, for he would rule with reason, not with rigour, by the power of truth, not of the sword. The world lay in ignorance and mistake; the Jewish teachers were corrupt, and caused them to err; it is time for the Lord to work. He came a teacher from God, from God as the Father of mercies, in pity to a dark deceived world; from God as the Father of lights, and Fountain of truth; all that light and truth which we may venture our souls upon.

2. His assurance of it; we know, not only I, but others; so he took it for granted, the thing being so plain and self-evident. Perhaps he knew that there were divers of the Pharisees and rulers with whom he conversed, that were under the same convictions, but had not the grace to own it. Or, we may suppose he speaks in the plural number; we know, because he brought with him one or more of his friends and pupils, to receive instructions from Christ, knowing them to be of common concern. Master (saith he) we come with a desire to be taught, to be thy scholars, for we are fully satisfied thou art a divine teacher.

3. The ground of this assurance; no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Here, 1. We are assured of the truth of Christ's miracles, and that they were not counterfeit. Here was Nicodemus, a judicious, sensible, inquisitive man, one that had all the reason, and opportunity imaginable to examine them, was so fully satisfied they were real miracles, that he was wrought upon by them, to go contrary to his interest, and the stream of those of his own rank, who were prejudiced against Christ.

2. We are directed what inference to draw from Christ's miracles; therefore we are to receive him as a teacher come from God: His miracles were his credentials. The course of nature could not be altered but by the power of the God of nature, who we are sure is the God of truth, and goodness, and would never let his seal to a lye, or a cheat.

3. The discourse between Christ and Nicodemus hereupon, or rather the sermon Christ preached to him; the contents of it, and that perhaps an abstract of Christ's publick preaching; see ver. 11, 12.

Four things our Saviour here discourseth of.

First, Concerning the necessity and nature of regeneration, and the new birth, ver. 3—8.

Now we must consider this, (1.) As pertinently answered to Nicodemus's address: Jesus answered, ver. 3. This answer was either, 1. A rebuke of what he saw defective in the address of Nicodemus. It was not enough for him to admire Christ's miracles, and acknowledge his mission, but he must be born again. It is plain he expected the kingdom of heaven, i. e. the kingdom of the Messiah now shortly to appear; is betimes aware of the dawning of that day; and according to the common notion of the Jews, he expects it to appear in external pomp and power; doubts not but this Jesus who works these miracles, is either the Messiah, or his prophet, and therefore makes his court to him, compliments him, and so hopes to secure a share to himself of the advantages of that kingdom. But Christ tells him he can have no benefit by that change of the state, unless there be a change of the spirit, of the principles and dispositions, equivalent to a new birth. Nicodemus came by night, but this will not do, saith Christ. His religion must be owned before men; so Dr. Hammond. Or, 2. A reply to what he saw designed in his address. When Nicodemus owned Christ a teacher come from God, one intrusted with an extraordinary revelation from heaven, he plainly intimated a desire to know what it was, and a readiness to receive it, and Christ gives it him. (2.) We may consider this as positively, and vehemently asserted by our Lord Jesus; *Verily, verily I say unto thee, I the amen, the amen say it*, so it may be read: I the faithful and true witness. The matter is settled irreversibly,

No. xciii.

That except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God: I say it to thee, though a Pharisee, though a master in Israel. Observe,

1. What it is that is required; to be born again; that is, (1.) We must live a new life. Birth is the beginning of life; to be born again is to begin anew, as those that have hitherto lived either much amiss, or to little purpose. We must not think to patch up the old building, but begin from the foundation. (2.) We must have a new nature, new principles, new affections, new aims. We must be born *ἀνωθεν*, which signifies both *denuo*, and *desuper*. (1.) We must be born anew, so the word is taken, Gal. iv. 9. and *ab initio*, Luke i. 3. By our first birth we were corrupt, shapen in sin and iniquity, we must therefore undergo a second birth; our souls must be fashioned and enlivened anew. (2.) We must be born from above, so the word is used by the evangelist, chap. iii. 31. — xix. 11. and I take it to be especially intended here, not excluding the other; for to be born from above, supposeth being born again. But this new birth has its rise from heaven, chap. i. 13. and its tendency to heaven: it is to be born to a divine and heavenly life, a life of communion with God and the upper world, and in order to this, it is to partake of a divine nature, and bear the image of the heavenly.

2. The indispensable necessity of this; except a man (any one that partakes of the human nature, and consequently of the corruptions of that, except he) be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. The kingdom of the Messiah begun in grace, and perfected in glory. Except we be born from above, we cannot see this. That is, (1.) We cannot understand the nature of it. Such is the nature of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, (in which Nicodemus desired to be instructed) that the soul must be new modelled and moulded; the natural man must become a spiritual man, before he is capable of receiving and understanding them, 1 Cor. ii. 14. (2.) We cannot receive the comfort of it; cannot expect any benefit by Christ and his gospel, nor have any part or lot in the matter. Note, Regeneration is absolutely necessary to our happiness here and hereafter. Considering what we are by nature, how corrupt and sinful; what God is in whom alone we can be happy, and what heaven is to which the perfection of our happiness is reserved, it will appear in the nature of the thing that we must be born again; because it is impossible we should be happy, if we be not holy; see 2 Cor. vi. 11, 12.

This great truth of the necessity of regeneration being thus solemnly laid down,

1. It is objected against by Nicodemus, ver. 4. how can a man be born when he is old; old as I am; *γέρον ὢν*, being an old man, Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Herein appears, 1. His weakness in knowledge; what Christ spoke spiritually, he seems to have understood after a corporal and carnal manner; as if there were no other way of regenerating and new moulding an immortal soul, but by new framing the body, and bringing that back to the rock out of which it was hewn; as if there were such a connexion between the soul and the body, that there could be no fashioning the heart anew, but by forming the bones anew. Nicodemus, as other the Jews, valued himself, no doubt, very much by his first birth, and the dignities and privileges of that; the place of it, the holy land, perhaps the holy city; his parentage, such as that which Paul could have gloried in, Phil. iii. 5. And therefore it is a great surprize to him to hear of being born again; could he be better bred and born, than bred and born an Israelite? Or by any other birth stand fairer for a room in the kingdom of the Messiah? Indeed they looked upon a proselyted Gentile to be as one born again, or born anew, but could not imagine how a Jew, a Pharisee, could ever better himself by being born again; he therefore thinks if he must be born again, it must be of her that bare him first. They that are proud of their first birth, are hardly brought to a new birth. 2. His willingness to be taught. He doth not turn his back upon Christ because of this hard saying, but ingenuously acknowledges his ignorance, which implies a desire to be better informed; and so I take this, rather than that he had such gross notions of the new birth Christ spoke of. Lord, make me to understand this, for it is a riddle to me; I am such a fool as to know no other way for a man to be born, but of his mother. When we meet with that in the things of God which is dark, and hard to be understood, we must with humility and industry continue our attendance upon the means of knowledge, till God shall reveal even that unto us.

2. It is opened and further explained by our Lord Jesus, ver. 5, 6, 7, 8. From the objection he takes occasion,

1. To repeat and confirm what he had said, ver. 5. *Verily, verily I say unto thee*, the very same that I said before. Note, The word of Christ is not yea and nay, but yea and amen; what he hath said he will abide by, whoever saith against it; nor will he retract any of his sayings for the ignorance and mistakes of men. Though Nicodemus understood not the mystery of regeneration, yet Christ asserts the necessity of it as positively as before. Note, It is folly to think of evading the obligation of evangelical precepts, by pleading that they are unintelligible, Rom. iii. 3, 4.



2. To expound and clear what he had said concerning regeneration; for the explication of which he further shews,

1. The *author* of this blessed change, and who it is that works it. To be born again is to be *born of the Spirit*, ver. 5, 6, 8. It is not wrought by any wisdom or power of our own, but by the power and influence of the blessed Spirit of grace: It is the *sanctification of the Spirit*, 1 Pet. i. 2. and *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, Tit. iii. 5. The word he works by is his inspiration, and the heart to be wrought on he has access to.

2. The *nature* of this change; and what that is which is wrought; it is *spirit*, ver. 6. Those that are regenerated are made *spiritual*, and refined from the dross and dregs of sensuality. The dictates and interests of the rational and immortal soul have retrieved the dominion they ought to have over the flesh. The Pharisees placed their religion in external purity, and external performances; and it would be a mighty change indeed with them, no less than a new birth to become *spiritual*.

3. The *necessity* of this change.

(1.) Christ here shews that it is necessary in the *nature of the thing*, for we are not fit to enter into the kingdom of God till we are born again; ver. 6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh*. Here is our malady, and the cause of it, which are such as speak plain, that there is no remedy but we must be *born again*.

(1.) We are here told *what we are*; we are *flesh*, not only corporeal but *corrupt*, Gen. vi. 3. The soul is still a spiritual substance, but so wedded to the flesh, so captivated by the wills of the flesh, so in love with the delights of the flesh, so employed in making provision for the flesh, that it is justly called *flesh*; it is carnal. And what communion can there be between God who is a *Spirit*, and a soul in this condition?

(2.) How we *came to be so*; by being *born of the flesh*: It is a corruption that is bred in the *bone* with us, and therefore we cannot have a new nature but we must be *born again*. The corrupt nature which is *flesh*, takes rise from our *first birth*, and therefore the new nature which is *Spirit*, must take rise from a second birth. Nicodemus spoke of entering again into his mother's womb and being born; but if he could do so, to what purpose? If he were born of his mother a hundred times, that would not mend the matter, for still that *which is born of the flesh is flesh*; a clean thing cannot be brought out of an unclean: He must seek for another original, must be born of the Spirit, or he cannot become spiritual. The case is in short this; man, though made to consist of body and soul, yet his spiritual part had then so much the dominion over his corporeal part, that he was denominated a *living soul*, Gen. ii. 7. but by indulging the appetite of the flesh in eating forbidden fruit, he prostituted the just dominion of the soul to the tyranny of sensual lust, and became no longer a *living soul*, but *flesh*; *Dust thou art*: The living soul became dead and unactive; thus in the *day* he sinned he *surely died*, and sadly, he became *earthly*. In this degenerate state he begat a son in his *own likeness*, he transmitted the human nature, which had been entirely deposited in his hands, thus corrupted and depraved; and in the same plight it is still propagated. Corruption and sin are woven into our nature; we are *shapen in iniquity*, which makes it necessary that the nature be changed. It is not enough to put on a new coat, or a new face, but we must put on the *new man*, we must be *new creatures*.

(2.) Christ makes it further necessary by his own word; ver. 7. *Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again*. (1.) Christ hath said it, and as he himself never did nor ever will unsay it, so all the world cannot gainsay it; that we *must be born again*. He who is the great *Law-giver*, whose will is a law; he who is the great Mediator of the new covenant, and has full power to settle the terms of our reconciliation to God, and happiness in him; he who is the great Physician of souls knows their case, and what is necessary to their cure; he hath said *ye must be born again*. I said unto thee that which all are concerned in, ye must, ye all, one as well as another, *ye must be born again*: not only the common people, but the rulers, the *masters in Israel*.

(2.) We are not to *marvel* at it; for when we consider the holiness of the God with whom we have to do, the great design of our redemption, the pravity of our nature, and the constitution of the happiness set before us, we shall not think it strange that so much stress is laid upon this as the one thing needful, that *we must be born again*.

4. This change is illustrated by two comparisons.

1. The regenerating work of the Spirit is compared to *water*, ver. 5. To be born again is to be *born of water*, and of the Spirit, i. e. of the Spirit working like water, as Matt. iii. 11. *with the Holy Ghost and with fire*, means, with the Holy Ghost as with fire.

1. That which is primarily intended here, is to shew that the Spirit in sanctifying a soul, (1.) *Cleanseth* and purifieth it as water; takes away its filth by which it was unfit for the kingdom of God. It is the *washing of regeneration*, Tit. iii. 5. *Ye are washed*, 1 Cor. vi. 11. see Ezek. xxxvi. 25. (2.) Cools and refresheth it as water doth the hunted hart, and the weary traveller. The Spirit is compared to water, Isa. xlv. 3. *John* vii. 38, 39. In the first creation the fruits of heaven were *born of water*, Gen. i. 20. in allusion to which, perhaps they that are born from above are born of water.

2. It is probable Christ had an eye to the ordinance of baptism, which John had used, and he himself had begun to use. You must be born again of the Spirit, which regeneration by the Spirit should be signified by washing with water; as the visible sign of that spiritual grace: not that all they, and they only, that are baptized are saved, but without that new birth which is wrought by the Spirit, and signified by baptism, none shall be looked upon as the *protected, privileged* subjects of the *kingdom of heaven*. The Jews cannot partake of the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom they had so long looked for, unless they quit all expectation of being justified by the works of the law, and submit to the *baptism of repentance*, the great gospel duty, for the remission of sins, the great gospel privilege.

2. It is compared to *wind*; ver. 8. *The wind blows where it listeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit*. The same word (*πνεῦμα*) signifies both the wind and the Spirit. The Spirit came upon the apostles in a *rushing mighty wind*, Acts ii. 2. His *strong* influences on the hearts of sinners are compared to the *breathing of the wind*, Ezek. xxxvii. 9. and his *sweet* influences on the souls of saints, to the north and south wind, Cant. iv. 16. This comparison is here used to shew,

1. That the Spirit in regeneration works *arbitrarily*, and as a free agent. The *wind blows where it listeth* for us, and doth not attend our order, nor is subject to our command; God *directs* it, it *fulfils his word*, Psal. cxlviii. 8. The Spirit dispenseth his influences where, and when, on whom, and in what measure and degree, he pleaseth; *dividing to every man severally as he will*, 1 Cor. xii. 11.

2. That he works *powerfully*, and with evident effects; *Thou hearest the sound thereof*; though its causes are hidden, its effects are manifest. When the soul is brought to mourn for sin, to groan under the burthen of corruption, to breathe after Christ, to cry, Abba, Father, then we *hear the sound of the Spirit*; we find he is at work, as Acts ix. 11. *Behold, he prays*.

3. That he works *mysteriously*, and in secret hidden ways; *Thou canst not tell whence it comes, or whither it goes*. How it gathers, and how it spends its strength is a riddle to us; so the manner and methods of the Spirit's working is a mystery: *Which way went the Spirit?* 1 Kin. xxii. 24. See Eccl. xi. 5. and compare it with Psal. cxxxix. 14.

Secondly, Here is a discourse concerning the *certainty, and sublimity of gospel truths* which Christ takes occasion for, from the weakness of Nicodemus.

Here is, 1. The objection which Nicodemus still made; ver. 9. *How can these things be?* Christ's explication of the doctrine of the necessity of regeneration, it should seem, made it never the clearer to him. The corruption of nature which makes it *necessary*, and the way of the Spirit which makes it *practicable*, are as much mysteries to him as the thing itself: though he had in general owned Christ a divine teacher, yet he was unwilling to receive his teachings, when they did not agree with the notions he had imbibed. Thus many profess to admit the doctrine of Christ in general, and yet will neither believe the truths of Christianity, nor submit to the laws of it further than *they please*: Christ shall be their teacher, provided they may chuse their lesson. Now here,

(1.) Nicodemus owns himself ignorant of Christ's meaning after all; *How can these things be?* They are things I do not understand, my capacity will not reach them: Thus the *things of the Spirit of God* are *foolishness to the natural man*. He is not only estranged from them, and therefore they are dark to him, but prejudiced against them, and therefore they are foolishness to him.

(2.) Because this doctrine was *unintelligible* to him (so he was pleased to make it) he questions the truth of it; as if because it was a *paradox* to him, it was a *chimera* in itself. Many have such an opinion of their own capacity, as to think that cannot be *proved* which they cannot *believe*; by *wisdom* they *knew not* Christ.

2. The reproof which Christ gave him for his dulness and ignorance; *Art thou a master in Israel?* *Διδάσκαλος*, a teacher, a tutor, one that sits in Moses's chair, and yet not only unacquainted with the doctrine of regeneration, but incapable of understanding it. This word is a reproof, (1.) To those that undertake to teach others, and yet are ignorant and unskilful in the word of righteousness themselves. (2.) To those that spend their time in learning and teaching notions and ceremonies in religion, niceties and criticisms in the scripture, and neglect that which is practical, and tends to reform the heart and life. Two words in the reproof are very emphatical. (1.) The place where his lot was cast; in Israel, where there was such great plenty of the means of knowledge, where divine revelation was. He might have learned this out of the Old Testament. (2.) The things he was thus ignorant in; *these things*, these *necessary things*, these *great things*, these *divine things*; had he never read, Psal. l. 5, 10. Ezek. xviii. 13. — xxxvi. 25, 26.

3. Christ's discourse hereupon, of the certainty and sublimity of gospel truths, ver. 11, 12, 13. To shew the folly of those who make strange of these things, and to recommend them to our search. Observe here,



1. That the truths Christ taught were very *certain*, and what we may venture upon; *ver. 11. We speak that we do know; we, whom doth he mean besides himself? Some understand it of those that bore witness to him, and with him on earth; the prophets, and John Baptist, they spoke what they knew, and had seen, and were themselves abundantly satisfied in: divine revelation carries its own proof along with it. Others of those that bore witness from heaven, the Father, and the Holy Ghost; the Father was with him, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him; therefore he speaks in the plural number, as Job. xiv. 13. We will come unto him. Observe, (1.) That the truths of Christ are of undoubted certainty. We have all the reason in the world to be assured, that the sayings of Christ are faithful sayings, and such as we may venture our souls upon; for he is not only a credible witness, who would not go about to deceive us, but a competent witness, who could not himself be deceived: We testify that we have seen. He spoke not upon hearsay, but upon the clearest evidence, and therefore with the greatest assurance. What he spoke of God, of the invisible world, of heaven and hell, of the divine will concerning us, and the counsels of peace, was what he knew, and had seen, for he was by him as one brought up with him, Prov. viii. 30. Whatever Christ spoke he spoke of his own knowledge. (2.) That the unbelief of sinners is greatly aggravated by the infallible certainty of the truths of Christ. The things are thus sure, thus clear, and yet ye receive not our witness. Multitudes to be unbelievers of that, which yet (so cogent are the motives of credibility) they cannot disbelieve.*

2. The truths Christ taught, though communicated in language and expressions borrowed from common and earthly things, yet in their own nature were most sublime and heavenly; this is intimated, *ver. 12. If I have told them earthly things, i. e. have told them the great things of God in similitudes taken from earthly things, to make them the more easy and intelligible, as that of the new birth, and the wind. If I have thus accommodated myself to your capacities, and listened to you in your own language, and cannot make you to understand my doctrine, what would you do, if I should accommodate myself to the nature of the things, and speak with the tongue of angels, that language which mortals cannot utter? if such familiar expressions be stumbling-blocks, what would abstract ideas be, and spiritual things painted proper? Now we may learn hence, (1.) To admire the height and depth of the doctrine of Christ; it is a great mystery of godliness. The things of the gospel are heavenly things, out of the reach of the enquirers of human reason, and much more out of the reach of its discoveries. (2.) To acknowledge with thankfulness the condescension of Christ, that he is pleased to suit the manner of the gospel revelation to our capacities; to speak to us as to children. He considers our frame, that we are of the earth, and our place, that we are on the earth, and therefore speaks to us earthly things, and makes things sensible, the vehicle of things spiritual, to make them the more easy and familiar to us: Thus he has done both in parables, and in sacraments. (3.) To lament the corruption of our nature, and our great unaptness to receive and entertain the truths of Christ. Earthly things are despised because they are vulgar, and heavenly things because they are abstruse; and so whatever method is taken, still some fault or other is found with it, Matt. xi. 17. but wisdom is, and will be justified of her children notwithstanding.*

3. Our Lord Jesus, and none but he, was fit to reveal to us a doctrine thus certain, thus sublime; *ver. 13. No man hath ascended up into heaven, but he—*

1. None but he was able to reveal to us the will of God for our salvation. Nicodemus addressed to Christ as a prophet, but he must know that he is greater than all the Old Testament prophets, for none of them had ascended into heaven. They wrote by divine inspiration, but not of their own knowledge; see Job. i. 18. Moses ascended into the mount, but not into heaven: No man hath attained to the certain knowledge of God, and heavenly things so as Christ has; see Matt. xi. 27. It is not for us to send to heaven for instructions, we must wait to receive what instructions heaven will send to us; see Prov. xxx. 4. Deut. xxx. 12.

2. Jesus Christ is able and fit, and every way qualified to reveal the will of God to us; for it is *he that came down from heaven, and is in heaven.* He had said, *ver. 12. How shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?* Now here, (1.) He gives them an instance of those heavenly things which he could tell them of, when he tells them of one that came down from heaven, and yet is the Son of man; is the Son of man, and yet is in heaven. If the regeneration of the soul of man was such a mystery, what then is the incarnation of the Son of God? These are divine and heavenly things indeed. We have here an intimation of Christ's two distinct natures in one person; his divine nature, in that he came down from heaven; his human nature, in that he is the Son of man, and that union of those two, in that, while he is the Son of man, yet he is in heaven. (2.) He gives them a proof of his ability to speak to them heavenly things, and to lead them into the arcana of the kingdom of heaven by telling them,

1. That he came down from heaven. The intercourse settled between God and man began above; the first motion towards it

did not arise from this earth, but came down from heaven. We love him, and send to him, because he first loved us, and sent to us. Now this speaks, (1.) Christ's divine nature. He that came down from heaven is certainly more than a mere man; he is the Lord from heaven, 1 Cor. xv. 47. (2.) His intimate acquaintance with the divine counsels; for coming from the court of heaven he had been from eternity conversant with them. (3.) It speaks God manifest. Under the Old Testament God's favours to his people are expressed by his hearing from heaven, 2 Chron. vii. 14. looking from heaven, Psal. lxxx. 14. speaking from heaven, Neh. ix. 13. sending from heaven, Psal. lvii. 3. But the New Testament shews us God coming down from heaven to teach and save us. That he thus descended is an admirable mystery, for the Godhead cannot change places, nor did he bring his body from heaven; but that he thus condescended for our redemption is a more admirable mercy; herein he commended his love.

2. That he is the Son of man, that Son of man spoken of by Daniel, chap. vii. 13. by which the Jews always understand to be meant the Messiah. Christ in calling himself the Son of man, shews that he is the second Adam, for the first Adam was the father of man. And of all the old Testament titles of the Messiah, he chose to make use of this, because it was most expressive of his humility, and most agreeable to his present state of humiliation.

3. That he is in heaven. Now at this time when he is talking with Nicodemus on earth, yet as God he is in heaven; the Son of man, as such, was not in heaven till his ascension; but he that was the Son of man, by his divine nature, was now every where present, and particularly in heaven. Thus the Lord of glory, as such, could not be crucified, nor God, as such, shed his blood, yet that person who was the Lord of glory was crucified, 1 Cor. ii. 8. and God purchased the church with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. So close is the union of the two natures in one person, that there is a communication of properties. He doth not say *ὁ θεὸς ἐστίν*, but *ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῷ ἱερῶν*, G O D is the *ὁ θεὸς*, he that is, and heaven is the habitation of his holiness.

Thirdly, Christ here discourseth of the great design of his own coming into the world, and the happiness of those that believe in him, *ver. 14—18.* Here we have the very marrow and quintessence of the whole gospel; that faithful saying, 1 Tim. i. 15. that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the children of men from death, and recover them to life. Now sinners are dead men upon a twofold account, (1.) As one that is mortally wounded, or sick of an incurable disease is said to be a dead man, for he is dying, and so Christ came to save us, by healing us as the brazen serpent healed the Israelites, *ver. 14, 15.* (2.) As one that is justly condemned to die for an unpardonable crime is a dead man, he is dead in law; and in reference to this part of our danger, Christ came to save as a prince or judge, publishing an act of indemnity, or general pardon, under certain provisos; this saving here is opposed to condemning, *ver. 16, 17, 18.*

1. Jesus Christ came to save us, by healing us, as the children of Israel that were stung with fiery serpents, were cured, and lived, by looking up to the brazen serpent; we have the story of it, Numb. xxi. 6, 7, 8, 9. It was the last miracle that passed through the hand of Moses before his death.

Now in this type of Christ we may observe,

1. The deadly and destructive nature of sin, that is implied here. The guilt of sin is like the pain of the biting of a fiery serpent; the power of corruption is like the venom diffused thereby. The devil is the old serpent, subtle at first, Gen. iii. 1. but ever since fiery, and his temptations fiery darts; his assaults terrifying, his victories destroying. Ask awakened consciences, ask damned sinners, and they will tell you how charming soever the allurements of sin are, at the last it bites like a serpent, Prov. xxiii. 30, 31. God's wrath against us for sin is as those fiery serpents, which God sent among the people to punish them for their murmurings. The curses of the law are as fiery serpents, so are all the tokens of divine wrath.

2. The powerful remedy provided against this fatal malady. The case of poor sinners is deplorable, but is it desperate? thanks be to God, it is not; there is balm in Gilead. The Son of man is lifted up, as the serpent of brass was by Moses, which cured the stung Israelites. (1.) It was a serpent of brass that cured them. Brass is bright; we read of Christ's feet shining like brass, Rev. i. 15. It is durable, Christ is the same; it was made in the shape of a fiery serpent, and yet had no poison, no sting, fitly representing Christ, who was made sin for us, and yet knew no sin; was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and yet not sinful; as harmless as a serpent of brass. The serpent was a cursed creature, Christ was made a curse. That which cured them, minded them of their plague; so in Christ sin is set before us most fiery and formidable. (2.) It was lifted up upon a pole, and so must the Son of man be lifted; thus it behoved him, Luke xxiv. 26, 46. No remedy now. Christ is lifted up, 1. In his crucifixion; he was lifted up upon the cross: His death is called his being lifted up, John xii. 32, 33. he was lifted up as a spectacle, as a mark; lifted up between heaven and earth, as if he had been unworthy of either, and abandoned by both. 2. In his exaltation; he was lifted up to the Father's right hand to give repentance and remission; he was lifted up to the cross, to be further lifted up to the



the crown. 3. In the *publishing* and *preaching* of his everlasting gospel, *Rev. xiv. 6.* The serpent was lifted up, that all the thousands of Israel might see it; Christ in the gospel is exhibited to us, evidently set forth; Christ is *lifted up* as an ensign, *Isa. xi. 10.* (3.) It was lifted up by Moses; Christ was made under the law of Moses, and Moses testified of him. (4.) Being thus lifted up, it was appointed for the cure of those that were bitten by fiery serpents; he that sent the plague provided the remedy; none could redeem and save us, but he whose justice had condemned us: It was God himself that *found the ransom*, and the efficacy of it depends upon his appointment. The *fiery serpents* were sent to punish them for their *tempting Christ*, so the apostle saith, *1 Cor. x. 9.* and yet they were healed by virtue derived from him. He whom we have offended is *our peace*.

3. The way of *applying* this remedy, and that is by *believing*, which plainly alludes to the Israelites *looking up* to the brazen serpent in order to their being healed by it. If any stung Israelite was either so little sensible of his pain and peril, or had so little confidence in the word of Moses, as not to look up to the brazen serpent, justly did he die of his wound; but every one that *looked up* to it did well, *Numb. xxi. 9.* If any so far slight either their disease by sin, or the method of cure by Christ, as not to embrace Christ upon his own terms, their blood is upon their own head: He hath said, *Look and be saved, Isa. xlv. 22.* look and live. We must take a complacency in, and give consent to the methods which infinite wisdom has taken of saving a guilty world, by the mediation of Jesus Christ, as the great sacrifice and intercessor.

4. The great encouragements given us by faith to look up to him. (1.) It was for this end that he was *lifted up*, that his followers might be saved, and he will pursue his end. (2.) The offer that is made of salvation by him is general, *That whosoever believes* in him, without exception, might have benefit by him. (3.) The salvation offered is complete. (1.) *They shall not perish*, shall not die of their wounds, though they may be pained, and ill frightened, iniquity shall not be their ruin. But that is not all. (2.) *They shall have eternal life.* They shall not only not die of their wound in the wilderness, but they shall reach Canaan, (which they were then just ready to enter into) they shall enjoy the promised rest.

2. Jesus Christ came to save us by *pardoning us*, that we might not die by the sentence of the law, *ver. 16, 17.* Here is *gospel* indeed, good news, the best that ever came from heaven to earth: Here is *much*, here is *all* in a little; the word of reconciliation in miniature.

1. Here is God's love in giving his Son for the world, *ver. 16.* where we have three things;

1. The great gospel mystery revealed: *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.* The love of God the Father, is the original of our regeneration by the Spirit, and our reconciliation by the lifting up of the Son. Note, 1. Jesus Christ is the only *begotten Son of God.* This magnifies his love in giving him for us, in giving him to us; now know we that he loves us, when he has given his *only begotten Son for us*, which speaks not only his dignity in himself, but his dearness to his Father; he was *always his delight.* 2. In order to the redemption and salvation of man, it pleased God to *give his only begotten Son.* He not only *gave him*, i. e. sent him into the world with full and ample power to negotiate a peace between heaven and earth, but he *gave him*, i. e. he gave him up to suffer and die for us, as the great propitiation, or expiatory sacrifice. It comes in here as a reason why he *must be lifted up*, for so it was determined and designed by the Father, who gave him for this purpose, and *prepared him a body* in order to it. His enemies could not have taken him, if his Father had not *given him.* Though he was not yet crucified, yet in the determinate counsel of God he was *given up*, *Acts ii. 23.* Nay, further, God hath *given him*, that is, he hath made an offer of him to all, and given him to all true believers, to all the intents and purposes of the new covenant. He has given him to be our *prophet*, a *witness to the people*; the high-priest of our profession; to be our peace; to be head of the church, and head over all things to the church; to be to us all we need. 3. Herein God has commended his *love to the world.* God *so loved the world*; so really, so richly. Now his creatures shall see that he loves them, and wishes them well. So loved the world of fallen man, as he did not love that of fallen angels, see *Rom. v. 8.* 1 *John iv. 10.* Behold and wonder, that the *great God* should love such a *worthless world*! That the *holy God* should love such a *wicked world* with a love of good will, when he could not look upon it with any complacency! This was a *time of love indeed*, *Ezek. xvi. 6, 8.* The Jews vainly conceived that the Messiah should be sent only in love to *their nation*, and to advance that upon the ruins of their neighbours; but Christ tells them he came in love to the *whole world*, Gentiles as well as Jews, 1 *John ii. 2.* Though many of the world of mankind perish, yet God's giving his only begotten Son was an instance of his love to the whole world, because through him there is a *general offer* of life and salvation made to all. It is love to the revolted, rebellious province, to issue out a proclamation of pardon and indemnity to all that will come in, plead it upon their knees, and return

to their allegiance. So far God loved the apostate, lapsed world, that he sent his Son with this fair proposal, *That whosoever believes in him, one or other, shall not perish.* Salvation has been of the Jews, but now Christ is *known*, *salvation to the ends of the earth, a common salvation.*

2. Here is the great gospel duty, and that is to *believe in Jesus Christ*, whom God hath thus given, given *for us*, given *to us*, to accept the gift, and answer the intention of the giver. We must yield an unfeigned assent and consent to the record God hath given in his word concerning his Son. God having given him to us to be our prophet, priest, and king, we must give up ourselves to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him.

3. Here is the great gospel benefit, *That whosoever believes in Christ shall not perish.* This he had said before, and here repeats it. It is the unspeakable happiness of all true believers, which they are eternally indebted to Christ for. (1.) That they are saved from the miseries of hell, delivered from *going down to the pit*, they *shall not perish*: God has taken away their sin, they shall not die; a pardon is purchased, and so the attainder is reversed. (2.) They are entitled to the joys of heaven: They *shall have everlasting life.* The convicted traitor is not only pardoned but preferred, and made a favourite, and treated as one whom the King of kings *delights to honour.* *Out of prison he cometh to reign*, *Eccl. iv. 14.* If believers, then children; and if children, then heirs.

2. Here is God's design in sending his Son into the world; it was, *that the world through him might be saved.* He came into the world with salvation in his eye, with salvation in his hand. Therefore the afore-mentioned offer of life and salvation is sincere, and shall be made good to all that by faith accept it. *Ver. 47.* God sent his Son into the world, this guilty, rebellious, apostate world; sent him as his agent, or ambassador, not as sometimes he had sent angels into the world, as visitants, but as resident. Ever since man sinned he has dreaded the approach and appearance of any special messenger from heaven, as being conscious of guilt, and looking for judgment; *we shall surely die, for we have seen God.* If therefore the Son of God himself come, we are concerned to enquire on what errand he comes; *is it peace?* Or, as they asked Samuel, trembling, *Comest thou peaceably?* And this scripture returns the answer, *peaceably.*

1. He did not come to *condemn the world.* We had reason enough to expect he should, for it is a guilty world; it is *convicted*, and what cause can be shewn, why judgment should not be given, and execution awarded according to law? That *one blood* of which all nations of men are made, *Acts xvii. 26.* is not only *tainted* with an hereditary *disease*, like Gehazi's leprosy, but it is *attainted* with an hereditary *guilt*, like that of the Amalekites, with whom God had war *from generation to generation*; and justly may such a world as this be *condemned*; and if God would have sent to condemn it, he had angels at command to pour out the vials of his wrath; a cherubim with a flaming sword ready to do execution. *If the Lord had been pleased to kill us*, he would not have sent his Son among us. He came with full powers indeed to *execute judgment*, *John v. 22, 27.* but did not begin with a judgment of condemnation, did not proceed upon the outlawry, nor take advantage against us for the breach of the *covenant of innocency*, but puts us upon a new trial before a *throne of grace.*

2. He came *that the world through him might be saved*; that a door of salvation might be opened to the world, and whoever would might enter in by it. God was in Christ *reconciling the world to himself*, and so *saving it.* An act of indemnity is passed, and published, through Christ a remedial law made; and the world of mankind dealt with not according to the rigours of the first covenant, but according to the riches of the second. *That the world through him might be saved*, for it could never be saved but *through him*; *there is not salvation in any other.* This is good news to a convinced conscience, healing to broken bones, and bleeding wounds, that Christ our judge came not to *condemn*, but to *save.*

3. From all this is inferred the happiness of true believers, *ver. 18.* *He that believeth on him is not condemned.* Though he have been a sinner, a great sinner, and *stands convicted* (*habes confitentem reum*) yet upon his believing, process is stayed, judgment is arrested, and he is *not condemned*. This speaks more than a reprieve; he is *not condemned*, that is, he is acquitted; he *stands upon his deliverance* (as we say) and if he be not condemned, he is discharged; *ἐκτίθηται*, he is *not judged*; not dealt with in strict justice, according to the desert of his sins. He is *accused*, and he cannot plead *not guilty* to the indictment, but he can plead *in bar*, can plead a *noli prosequi* upon the indictment, as blessed Paul doth, *who is he that condemns? it is Christ that died.* He is *afflicted*, chastened of God, persecuted by the world, but he is *not condemned*. The cross, perhaps, lies heavy upon him, but he is saved from the curse. *Condemned by the world*, it may be, but not *condemned with the world*, *Rom. viii. 1.* 1 *Cor. xi. 32.*

Fourthly, Christ in the close discourseth concerning the *deplorable condition of those that persist in unbelief, and wilful ignorance*, *ver. 18—21.*



1. Read here the doom of those that will not *believe in Christ*; they are *condemned already*. Observe, (1.) How great the *sin* of unbelievers is; it is aggravated from the dignity of the person they flight; they *believe not in the name of the only begotten Son of God*, who is infinitely true, and deserves to be believed; infinitely good; and deserves to be embraced. God sent one to save us that was *dearest* to himself, and shall not he be *dearest* to us? Shall we not believe on his name, who has a name above every name? (2.) How great the *misery* of unbelievers is; they are *condemned already*; which speaks, (1.) A *certain* condemnation. They are as sure to be condemned in the judgment of the great day, as if they were condemned already. (2.) A *present* condemnation. The curse has already taken hold of them, the wrath of God now fastens upon them: They are condemned already, for their own hearts condemn them. (3.) A condemnation *grounded upon their former guilt*: He is condemned already, for he lies open to the law for all his sins; the obligation of the law is in full force, power, and virtue, against him, because he is not by faith interested in the gospel defeasance; *he is condemned already, because he has not believed*. Unbelief may truly be called the great damning sin, because it leaves us under the guilt of all our other sins; it is a sin against the *remedy*, against our *appeal*.

2. Read also the doom of those that would not so much as *know him*, ver. 19. Many *inquisitive* people had knowledge of Christ and his doctrine, and miracles, but they were prejudiced against him; and would not believe in him, while the generality were *sottishly* careless and stupid, and would not *know him*. And *this is the condemnation*, the sin that ruined them, *that light is come into the world, and they loved darkness rather*. Now here observe, (1.) That the gospel is light, and when the gospel came, *light came into the world*. Light is *self-evidencing*, so is the gospel, it proves its own divine original. Light is *discovering*, and *truly the light is sweet*, and rejoiceth the heart. It is a light shining in a dark place, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it. It is *come into all the world*, Col. i. 6. and not confined to one corner of it, as the Old Testament light was. (2.) It is the unspeakable folly of the most of men, that they loved darkness rather than light, rather than *this* light. The Jews loved the dark shadows of their law, and the instructions of their *blind guides*, rather than the doctrine of Christ. The Gentiles loved their superstitious services of an *unknown God*, whom they *ignorantly worshipped*, rather than the *reasonable service* which the gospel enjoins. Sinners that were wedded to their lusts, loved their ignorance and mistakes which supported them in their sins, rather than the truths of Christ that would have parted them from their sins. Man's apostasy began in an affectation of forbidden knowledge, but is kept up by an affectation of forbidden ignorance. Wretched man is in love with his sickness, in love with his slavery, and will not be made *free*, will not be made *whole*. (3.) The true reason why men love darkness rather than light, is, *because their deeds are evil*. They love darkness, because they think it is an excuse for their evil deeds, and they hate the light because it robs them of the good opinion they had of themselves, by shewing them their sinfulness and misery. Their case is sad, and because they are resolved, they will not *mend* it, they are resolved they will not *see it*. (4.) Wilful ignorance is so far from excusing sin, that it will be found at the great day to aggravate the condemnation. *This is the condemnation*, this is it that ruins souls, that they shut their eyes against the light, and will not so much as admit a parley with Christ and his gospel; they set God so much at defiance, that they desire not the knowledge of his ways, *Job xxi. 14*. We must account in the judgment, not only for the knowledge we *had* and *used not*, but for the knowledge we *might have had*, and *would not*; not only for the knowledge we *sinned against*, but for the knowledge we *sinned away*.

For the further illustration of this, he shews, ver. 20, 21. that according as mens hearts and lives are good or bad, accordingly they stand affected to the light Christ has brought into the world.

1. It is not strange, if those that do evil, and resolve to persist in it, hate the light of Christ's gospel, for it is a common observation, that *every one that doth evil, hateth the light*, ver. 20. Evil-doers seek concealment out of sense of shame, and fear of punishment, see *Job xxiv. 13*, &c. Sinful works are *works of darkness*, sin from the first affected concealment, *John xxxi. 33*. The *light shakes* the wicked, *Job xxxviii. 12, 13*. Thus the gospel is a terror to the wicked world; they *come not to this light*, but keep as far off it as they can, *lest their deeds should be reprov'd*. Note, 1. The light of the gospel is sent into the world to *reprove the evil deeds* of sinners; to make them manifest, *Eph. v. 13*. to *shew people their transgressions*, to shew that to be sin, which was not thought to be so; and to shew them the evil of their transgressions, *that sin by the new commandment might appear exceeding sinful*. The gospel has its convictions to make way for its consolations. 2. It is for this reason that evil-doers *hate the light* of the gospel. There were those that *had done evil*, and were sorry for it, who had this light welcome, as the *publicans and harlots*. But he that *doth evil*, that doth it, and resolves to go on in it, *hates the light*; cannot bear to be

told of his faults. All that opposition which the gospel of Christ has met with in the world, comes from the *wicked heart*, influenced by the *wicked one*. Christ is hated because sin is loved. 3. They who do not *come to the light*, thereby evidence a secret *hatred* of the light. If they had not an antipathy to *saving knowledge*, they would not sit down so contentedly in *damning ignorance*.

2. On the other hand, upright hearts that approve themselves to God in their integrity, bid this light welcome, ver. 20. *He that doth truth comes to the light*. It seems then, though the gospel had many enemies, it had some friends. It is a common observation, that *truth seeks no corners*. They who mean and act honestly, dread not a scrutiny, but desire it rather; now this is applicable to the gospel light; as it *convinceth* and *terrifies* evil-doers, so it *confirms* and *comforts* those that walk in their integrity. Observe here,

1. The character of a *good man*. (1.) He is one that *doth truth*; i. e. he acts truly and sincerely in all he doth. Though sometimes he come short of *doing good*, the good he would do, yet he *doth truth*; he aims honestly, he has his infirmities, but holds fast his integrity; as Gaius, that *did faithfully*, 3 John 5. as Paul, 2 Cor. i. 12. as Nathanael, *John i. 47*. as Aha, 1 Kings xv. 14. (2.) He is one that *cometh to the light*. He is ready to receive and entertain divine revelation, as far as it appears to him to be so, what uneasiness soever it may create him. He that *doth truth* is willing to know the *truth* by himself, and to *have his deeds made manifest*. A good man is much in trying himself, and desirous that God would try him, *Psal. xxvi. 2*. He is solicitous to *know* what the will of God is, and resolves to *do it*, though never so contrary to his own wills and interests.

2. Here is the character of a *good work*; it is *wrought in God*, in union with him by a covenanting faith, and in communion with him by devout affections. Our works are then *good*, and will bear the test when the will of God is the rule of them, and the glory of God the end of them: when they are done in his strength, and for his sake, to him, and not to men; and if by the light of the gospel it be manifest to us, that our works are thus wrought, *then shall we have rejoicing*, Gal. vi. 4. 2 Cor. i. 12.

Thus far we have Christ's discourse with *Nicodemus*; it is likely much more passed between them, and it had a good effect, for we find, *John xix. 39*. that Nicodemus, though he was puzzled at first, yet afterwards became a faithful disciple of Christ.

22. ¶ After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there he tarried with them, and baptized. 23. ¶ And John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. 24. For John was not yet cast into prison. 25. ¶ Then there arose a question between *some* of Johns disciples and the Jews, about purifying. 26. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. 27. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. 28. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 29. He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegrooms voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. 30. He must increase, but I must decrease. 31. He that cometh from above, is above all: he that is of the earth, is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven, is above all. 32. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. 33. He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal, that God is true. 34. For he whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. 35. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. 36. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

In these verses we have,

1. Christ's removal into the land of Judea, ver. 22. and there he tarried with his disciples. Observe,

(1.) Our Lord Jesus, after he entered upon his publick work, travelled much, and removed often, as the patriarchs in their sojournings. As it was a good part of his humiliation, that he had no certain dwelling-place, but was as Paul, *in journeyings* often,



often, so it was an instance of his unwearied industry in the work, for which he came into the world, that he went about in prosecution of it; many a weary step he took to do good to souls. The *sun of righteousness* took a large circuit, to diffuse his light and heat, *Psal. xix. 6.*

(2.) He was not wont to stay long at Jerusalem; though he went frequently thither, yet he soon returned into the country; as here, *After these things*, after he had had this discourse with Nicodemus, he came into the land of Judea; not so much for greater privacy, the mean and obscure places best suited the humble Jesus in his humbled state, but for greater usefulness; his preaching and miracles perhaps made *most noise* at Jerusalem, the fountain head of news, but did *least good* there, where the topping men of the Jewish church had so much the ascendant.

(3.) When he came into the land of Judea, his disciples came with him, for these were they that continued with him in his temptations. Many that flocked to him at Jerusalem, would not follow his motions into the country, they had no business there, but his disciples attended him. If the ark remove, it is better remove and go after it (as they did, *Josh. iii. 3.*) than sit still without it, though it be in Jerusalem itself.

(4.) There he tarried with them, *διέτριβε*. He conversed with them, discoursed with them. He did not retire into the country for his ease and pleasure, but for more free conversation with his disciples, and followers. See *Cant. vii. 11, 12.* Note, Those that are ready to go with Christ, shall find him as ready to stay with them. It is supposed he now staid five or six months in this country.

(5.) There he baptized; he admitted disciples, such as believed in him, and had more honesty and courage than those had at Jerusalem, *chap. ii. 24.* John began to baptize in the land of Judea, *Matt. iii. 1.* therefore Christ began there, for John had said, *There comes one after me.* He baptized not himself, with his own hand, but his disciples by his order and directions, as appears, *chap. iv. 4.* But his disciples baptizing was his baptizing. Holy ordinances are Christ's, though administered by weak men.

2. John's continuance in his work as long as his opportunities lasted, *ver. 23, 24.* Here we are told,

1. That John was baptizing. Christ's baptism was for substance the same with John's, for he bore witness to Christ, and therefore they did not at all clash or interfere with one another. But, (1.) Christ began to preach and baptize before John laid it down, that he might be ready to receive John's disciples when he should be taken off, and so the wheels might be kept a going. It is a comfort to useful men, when they are going off the stage, to see those rising up, who are likely to fill up their room. (2.) John continued to preach and baptize, though Christ had taken it up; for he would still, according to the measure given to him, advance the interests of God's kingdom. There was still work for John to do, for Christ was not yet generally known, nor the minds of people thoroughly prepared for him by repentance. From heaven John had received his command, and he would go on in his work, till from thence he received his countermand, and would have his dismissal from the same hand that gave him his commission. He doth not come in to Christ, lest what had formerly passed should look like a combination between them; but he goes on with his work, till providence lays him aside. The greater gifts of some do not render the labours of others that come short of them needless, and useless; there is work enough for all hands. They are sullen that will sit down and do nothing, when they see themselves out-shone. Though we have but one talent, we must account for that; and when we see our selves going off, yet must go on to the last.

2. That he baptized in Ænon near Salim, places we find no where else mentioned; and therefore the learned are altogether at a loss where to find them; where-ever it was, it seems, John removed from place to place; he did not think there was any virtue in Jordan, because Jesus was baptized there, which should engage him to stay there, but as he saw cause, removed to other waters. Ministers must follow their opportunities; and he chose a place where there was much water; *ὕδατα πολλὰ*, many waters, i. e. many streams of water; so that where-ever he met with any that were willing to submit to his baptism, water was at hand to baptize them with; shallow perhaps, as is usual where there are many brooks, but such as would serve his purpose. And in that country, plenty of water was a valuable thing.

3. That thither people came to him, and were baptized. Though they did not come in such vast crowds, as they did when he first appeared, yet now he was not without encouragement, but there were still those that attended and owned him. Some refer this both to John and to Jesus; *They came and were baptized*, i. e. some came to John, and were baptized by him, some to Jesus, and were baptized by him, and as their baptism was one, so were their hearts.

4. It is noted, *ver. 4.* that John was not yet cast into prison, to clear the order of the story, and to shew that these passages related here, *chap. ii. and iii.* in the harmony, are to come in before, *Matt. iv. 12.* John never desisted from his work as long as he

had his liberty; nay, he seems to have been the more industrious, because he foresaw his time was short; he was not yet cast into prison, but he expected it ere long, *John ix. 4.*

3. A contest between John's disciples and the Jews, about purifying, *ver. 25.* See how the gospel of Christ came not to send peace upon earth, but division. Observe,

1. Who were the disputants; some of John's disciples, and the Jews who had not submitted to his baptism of repentance. Penitents and impenitents divide this sinful world. In this contest, it should seem, John's disciples were the aggressors, and gave the challenge, and it is a sign they were novices that had more zeal than discretion. The truths of God have often suffered by the rashness of some, that have undertaken to defend them, before they were able to do it.

2. What was the matter in dispute, about purifying, about religious washing. (1.) We may suppose that John's disciples cried up his baptism, his purifying, as *instar omnium*, and gave the preference to that as perfecting and superseding all the purifications of the Jews; and they were in the right; but young converts are too apt to boast of their attainments, whereas, he that has found the treasure should hide it, till he is sure he has it, and not talk of it too much at first. (2.) No doubt, but the Jews with as much assurance, applauded the purifying that were in use among them, both those that were instituted by the law of Moses, and those that were imposed by the tradition of the elders; for the former they had a divine warrant, and for the latter the usage of the church. Now it is very likely that the Jews in this dispute, when they could not deny the excellent nature and design of John's baptism, raised an objection against it from Christ's baptism, which gave occasion for the complaint that follows here, *ver. 26.* Here is John baptizing in one place (say they) and Jesus at the same time baptizing in another place, and therefore John's baptism, which his disciples so much applaud, is either, (1.) Dangerous, and of ill consequence to the peace of the church and state, for you see it opens a door to endless parties. Now John has begun, we shall have every little teacher set up for a baptist presently. Or, (2.) That at the best it was defective and imperfect. If John's baptism which you cry up thus, have any good in it, yonder the baptism of Jesus goes beyond it, so that for your parts, you are shaded already by a greater light, and your baptism is soon gone out of request. Thus objections are made against the gospel, from the advancement and improvement of gospel light, as if childhood and manhood were contrary to each other, and the superstructure were against the foundation. There was no reason to object Christ's baptism against John's, for they consisted very well together.

4. A complaint which John's disciples made to their master concerning Christ, and his baptizing, *ver. 26.* They being nonplussed by the fore-mentioned objection, and probably ruffled and put into a heat by it, come to their master, and tell him, *Rabbi, he that was with thee*, and was baptized of thee, is now set up for himself, he baptizeth, and all men come to him, and wilt thou suffer it? Their itch of disputing occasioned this. It is common for men, when they find themselves run aground in the heat of disputation, to fall foul upon those that do them no harm. If these disciples of John had not undertaken to dispute about purifying, before they understood the doctrine of baptism, they might have answered the objection without being put into a passion. In their complaint they speak respectfully to their own master, *Rabbi*; but speak very slightly of our Saviour, though they do not name him.

1. They suggest that Christ's setting up a baptism of his own was a piece of presumption, very unaccountable; as if John having first set up this right of baptizing, he must have the monopoly of it, and as it were a patent for the invention. *He that was with thee beyond Jordan*, as a disciple of thine, behold and wonder, the same, the very same, baptizeth, and takes thy work out of thy hand. Thus the voluntary condescensions of the Lord Jesus, as that of his being baptized by John, are often unjustly and very unkindly turned to his reproach.

2. They suggest that it was a piece of ingratitude to John. He to whom thou bearest witness baptizeth; as if Jesus owed all his reputation to the honourable character John gave of him, and yet had very unworthily improved it to the prejudice of John. But Christ needed not John's testimony, *John v. 36.* He reflected more honour upon John than he received from him; yet thus it is incident to us to think that others are more indebted to us than really they are. And besides, Christ's baptism was not in the least an impeachment, but indeed the greatest improvement of John's baptism; which was but to lead the way to Christ's. John was just to Christ in bearing witness to him, and Christ's answering his testimony, did rather enrich than impoverish John's ministry.

3. They conclude that it would be a total eclipse to John's baptism, for all men come to him; they that used to follow with us, now flock after him, it is therefore time for us to look about us. It was not indeed strange that all men came to him. As far as Christ is manifested he will be magnified; but why should John's disciples grieve at that? Note, Aiming at the monopoly of honour and respect, has been in all ages the bane of the church, and the shame of its members and ministers; as also a vying of interests, and



and a jealousy of rivalry and competition. We mistake if we think that the excelling gifts and graces, and labours and usefulness of one, is a diminution and disparagement to another, that has obtained mercy to be faithful, for the Spirit is a free agent, *dispensing to every one severally as he will*. Paul rejoiced in the usefulness, even of those that opposed him, *Phil. i. 18*. we must leave it to God to chuse, employ, and honour his own instruments as he pleaseth, and not covet to be placed alone.

5. Here is John's answer to this complaint, which his disciples made, *ver. 27, &c.* His disciples expected he should have resented this matter as they did; but Christ's manifestation to Israel was no surprise to John, but what he looked for; it was no disturbance to him, but what he wished for. He therefore checked the complaint, as Moses, *enviest thou for my sake?* And took this occasion to confirm the testimonies he had formerly born to Christ as superior to him, cheerfully consigning and turning over to him all the interest he had in Israel. In this discourse here, the first ministers of the gospel (for so John was) is an excellent pattern to all ministers to *humble themselves, and to exalt the Lord Jesus*.

First, John here *abaseth himself in comparison with Christ*, *ver. 27—30*. The more others magnify us, the more we must humble our selves; and fortify our selves against the temptation of flattery and applause, and the jealousy of our friends for our honour, by remembering our place, and what we are, *1 Cor. iii. 5*.

1. John acquiesceth in the divine disposal, and satisfieth himself with that, *ver. 27*. *A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven*, whence every good gift comes, *Jam. i. 18*. A general truth very applicable in this case. Different employments are according to the direction of divine providence; different endowments according to the distribution of the divine grace. *No man can take any true honour to himself, Heb. v. 4*. We have as necessary and constant a dependence upon the grace of God in all the motions and actions of the spiritual life, as we have upon the providence of God in all the motion and actions of the natural life: now this comes in here as a reason, (1.) Why we should not envy those that have a larger share of gifts than we have, or move in a larger sphere of usefulness. John minds his disciples, that Jesus had not thus excelled him, *except he had received it from heaven*, for as man and mediator he received gifts; and if God gave him the Spirit without measure, *ver. 34*. shall they grudge at it? The same reason will hold as to others. If God is pleased to give to others more ability and success, than to us, shall we be displeased at it, and reflect upon him as unjust, unwise, and partial? See *Matt. xx. 15*. (2.) Why we should not be discontented, though we be inferior to others in gifts and usefulness, and be eclipsed by their excellencies. John was ready to own that it was the gift, the free gift of heaven, that made him a preacher, a prophet, a baptist, it was God that gave him the interest he had in the love and esteem of the people; and if now his interest decline, God's will be done! He that gives may take. What we receive from heaven, we must take as it is given: Now John never received a commission for a standing perpetual office, but only for a temporary one, which must soon expire, and therefore when he has fulfilled his ministry, he can contentedly see it go out of date. Some give quite another sense of these words; John had taken pains with his disciples to teach them the reference which his baptism had to Christ, who should come after him, and yet be preferred before him, and do that for them which he could not do; and yet after all they dote upon John, and grudge this preference of Christ above him; well, faith John, I see, *A man can receive, i. e. perceive nothing, except it be given him from heaven*. The labours of ministers are all lost labour, unless the grace of God make it effectual. Men do not understand that which is made most plain, nor believe that which is made most evident, unless it be given them from heaven to understand and believe it.

2. John appeals to the testimony he had formerly given concerning Christ, *ver. 18*. you can bear me witness, that I said again and again, *I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him*. See how steady and constant John was in his testimony to Christ, and not as a reed shaken with the wind; neither the frowns of the chief priests, nor the flatteries of his own disciples could make him change his note. Now this serves here, (1.) As a conviction to his disciples, of the unreasonableness of their complaint. They had spoken of the witness which their master bore to Jesus. *ver. 26*. Now, faith John, do not you remember what the testimony was that I did bear? Call that to mind, and you will see your own cavil answered. Did I not say, *I am not the Christ*, why then do you set me up as a rival with him? that is, did I not say, *I am sent before him*? Why then doth it seem strange to you that I should stand by and give way to him? (2.) It is a comfort to himself, that he had never given his disciples any occasion thus to set him up in competition with Christ; but, on the contrary, had particularly cautioned them against this mistake, though he might have made a hand of it for himself. It is a satisfaction to faithful ministers, if they have done what they could in their places, to prevent any extravagancies that their people ran into. John had not only not encouraged them to hope that he was the Messiah, but had plainly told them the contrary; which was now

a satisfaction to him. It is a common excuse for those who have undue honour paid them, *Si populus vult decipi, decipiat*; but that is an ill maxim for them to go by, whose business it is to undeceive people. *The lip of truth shall be established*.

3. John professeth the great satisfaction he had in the advancement of Christ and his interest. He was so far from regretting it, as his disciples did, that he rejoiced in it. This he expresseth, *ver. 29*. by an elegant similitude. (1.) He compares our Saviour to the bridegroom. *He that has the bride is the bridegroom*. Do all men come to him? It is well, whither else should they go? Has he got the throne in mens affections? Who else should have it? It is his right; to whom should the bride be brought but to the bridegroom? Christ was prophesied of in the Old Testament, as a bridegroom, *Psal. xlv. The word was made flesh*, that the disparity of nature might not be a bar to the match; provision is made for the purifying of the church, that the defilement of sin might be no bar; Christ espouseth his church to himself; he has the bride, for he has her love, he has her promise, *The church is subject to Christ*. As far as particular souls are devoted to him in faith and love, so far the bridegroom has the bride. (2.) He compares himself to the friend of the bridegroom, who attends upon him, to do him honour and service, assists him in prosecuting the match, speaks a good word for him, useth his interest on his behalf, rejoiceth when the match goes on, and, most of all, when the point is gained, and he bath the bride. All that John had done in preaching and baptizing, was to introduce, and now he was come, he had what he wished for. The friend of the bridegroom stands and hears him, stands, expecting him, and waiting for him, rejoiceth with joy, because of the bridegroom's voice, because he is come to the marriage, after he had been long expected. Note, 1. Faithful ministers are friends of the bridegroom, to recommend him to the affections and choice of the children of men; to bring letters and messages from him, for he courts by proxy; and herein they must be faithful to him. 2. The friends of the bridegroom must stand and hear the bridegroom's voice, must receive instructions from him, and attend his orders; must desire to have proofs of Christ speaking in them and with them, *2 Cor. xiii. 3*. that is the bridegroom's voice. 3. The espousing of souls to Jesus Christ in faith and love, is the fulfilling of the joy of every good minister. If the day of Christ's espousals be the day of the gladness of his heart, *Cant. iii. ult.* it cannot but be theirs too, who love him, and wish well to his honour and kingdom. Surely they have no greater joy.

4. He owns it highly fit and necessary, that the reputation and interest of Christ should be advanced, and his own diminished, *ver. 30*. *He must increase, but I must decrease*. If they grieve at the growing greatness of the Lord Jesus, they will have more and more occasion to grieve, as they have that indulge themselves in envy and emulation. John speaks of Christ's increase, and his own decrease, not only as necessary and unavoidable, which could not be helped, and therefore must be born, but as highly just and agreeable, and is entirely satisfied in it. (1.) He was well pleased to see the kingdom of Christ getting ground. *He must increase*. You think he has gained a deal, but it is nothing to what he will gain. Note, The kingdom of Christ is and will be a growing kingdom, like the light of the morning, like the grain of mustard-seed. (2.) He was not at all displeased, that the effect of this was the diminishing of his own interest, *I must decrease*. Created excellencies are under this law, they must decrease; *I have seen an end of all perfection*. Note, 1. The shining forth of the glory of Christ eclipseth the lustre of all other glory. The glory that stands in competition with Christ, that of the world and the flesh, decreaseth and loseth ground in the soul, as the knowledge and love of Christ increase and get ground; but it is here spoken of that which is subservient to him. As the light of the morning increaseth, that of the morning-star decreaseth. 2. If our diminution and abasement may but in the least contribute to the advancement of Christ's name, we must cheerfully submit to it, and be content to be any thing, to be nothing, so that Christ may be all.

Secondly, John Baptist here advanceth Christ, and instructs his disciples concerning him, that they might be so far from grieving that so many come to him, that they might come to him themselves.

1. He instructs them concerning the dignity of Christ's person, *ver. 31*. *He that cometh from above, that cometh from heaven, is above all*. Here, (1.) He supposeth his divine original, that he came from above, from heaven, which speaks not only his divine extraction, but his divine nature. He had a being before his conception, a heavenly being. None but he that came from heaven, was fit to shew us the will of heaven, or the way to heaven. When God would save man, he sent from above. (2.) Hence he infers his sovereign authority, he is above all. Above all things, and all persons, *God over all, blessed for evermore*. It is daring presumption to dispute precedency with him. When we come to speak of the honours of the Lord Jesus, we find they transcend all conception and expression, and we can say but this, he is above all. It was said of John Baptist, there was not a greater came from heaven. His descent from heaven put such a dignity upon him, as he was not divested of by his being made flesh; still he was above all.



This he further illustrates by the meanness of those, who stood in competition with him, *He that is of the earth is earthly*, *ὁ ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐστὶ γῆς*, *He that is of the earth is of the earth*; he that has his original of the earth, has his food out of the earth, has his converse with earthly things, and his concern is for them. Note, 1. Man has his rise out of the earth; not only Adam at first, but we also still are *formed out of the clay*, Job xxxiii. 6. Look to the rock whence we were hewn. 2. Man's constitution is therefore *earthly*; not only his body frail and mortal, but his soul corrupt and carnal, and its bent and bias strong towards earthly things. The prophets and apostles were of the same mould with other men; they were but *earthen vessels*, though they had a rich treasure lodged in them, and shall these be set up as rivals with Christ, *Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth*, but let them not cope with him that came from heaven.

2. Concerning the *excellency and certainty of his doctrine*. His disciples were displeased, that Christ's preaching was admired and attended upon more than his; but he tells them there was reason enough for it. For,

1. He for his part *spoke of the earth*, and so do all those that are of the earth. The prophets were men, and spoke like men; of themselves they could not speak, but of the earth, 2 Cor. iii. 5. The preaching of the prophets, and of John, was but low and flat compared with Christ's preaching; as heaven is high above the earth, so were his thoughts above theirs. By them God spoke on earth, but in Christ he speaketh from heaven.

2. But he that cometh from heaven, is not only in his person, but in his doctrine, above all the prophets that ever lived on earth; none teacheth like him. The doctrine of Christ is here recommended to us.

(1.) As infallibly *sure and certain*, and to be entertained accordingly, ver. 32. *What he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth*. See here, (1.) Christ's divine knowledge; he testified nothing but *what he had seen and heard*, what he was perfectly apprized of, and thoroughly acquainted with. What he discovered of the divine nature, and of the invisible world, was what he had *seen*; what he revealed of the mind of God, was what he had *heard* immediately from him, and not at second hand. The prophets testified what was made known to them in dreams and visions, by the mediation of angels, but not what they had seen and heard. John was the crier's voice, that said, *Make room for the witness, and keep silence*, while the charge is given, but then leaves it to the witness to give in his testimony himself, and the judge to give the charge himself. The gospel of Christ is not a doubtful opinion, like an hypothesis, or new notion in philosophy, which every one is at liberty to believe, or not; but it is a revelation of the mind of God, which is of *eternal truth* in itself, and of *infinite concern* to us. (2.) His divine grace and goodness; that which he had *seen and heard*, because he knew it nearly concerned us, he was pleased to make known to us. What Paul had seen and heard in the third heavens, he could not testify, 2 Cor. xii. 4. But Christ knew how to utter what he had *seen and heard*. Christ's preaching is here called his *testifying*, to note, (1.) The *convincing evidence* of it; it was not reported as news by hearsay, but it was testified as evidence given in court, with great caution and assurance. (2.) The affectionate earnestness of the delivery of it; it was testified with concern and importunity, as Acts xviii. 5.

From the *certainty of Christ's doctrine*, John takes occasion, (1.) To lament the infidelity of the most of men; though he testifies what is infallibly true, yet *no man receiveth his testimony*, i. e. very few, next none, none in comparison with those that refuse it. They receive it not, they will not hear it, they do not heed it, or give credit to it. This he speaks of, not only as matter of *wonder*, that such a testimony should not be received, who hath believed our report, how stupid and foolish is the greatest part of mankind, what enemies to themselves! But as matter of *grief*; John's disciples grieved that *all men came to Christ*, ver. 26. they thought his followers too many. But John grieves that *no man came to him*, he thought them too few. Note, The unbelief of sinners is the grief of saints. It was for this that St. Paul had *great heaviness*, Rom. ix. 2. (2.) He takes occasion to commend the faith of the chosen remnant, ver. 37. *He that hath received his testimony* (and some such there were, though very few) hath *set to his seal that God is true*; God is true, though we do not set our seal to it; let God be true, and every man a liar; his truth needs not our faith to support it, but by faith we do ourselves the honour and justice to subscribe to his truth, and hereby God reckons himself honoured. God's promises are all *yea, and amen*, by faith we put our *amen* to them, as Rev. xxii. 20. Observe, He that receives the testimony of Christ, subscribes not only to the truth of *Christ*, but to the truth of *God*, for his name is the *word of God*; the commandments of God, and the testimony of Christ, are put together, Rev. xii. 17. By believing in Christ we set to our seal, (1.) That God is true to all the promises which he has made concerning *Christ*; that which he spake by the mouth of all his *holy prophets*; what he *swore to our fathers* is all accomplished, and not one iota or tittle of it fallen to the ground, Luke i. 70, &c. Acts xiii. 32, 33. (2.) That he is true to all the promises he

has made in *Christ*; we venture our souls upon God's veracity, being satisfied that he is *true*, we are willing to deal with him upon *trust*; and to quit all in this world for a happiness in *reversion*, and out of sight. By this we greatly honour God's faithfulness. Whom we give credit to, we give honour to.

(2.) It is recommended to us as a *divine doctrine*; not his own, but *his that sent him*, ver. 39. *For he whom God hath sent, speaks the word of God*, which he was sent to speak, and enabled to to speak, *for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him*. The prophets were as messengers that brought letters from heaven; but Christ came under the character of an *ambassador*, and treats with us as such; for, (1.) He spoke the *words of God*, and nothing he said favoured of human infirmity; both substance and language were divine. He proved himself *sent of God*, John iii. 1. and therefore his words are to be received as the words of God. By this rule we may try the spirits; those that speak as the oracles of God, and prophesy according to the proportion of faith, are to be received as *sent of God*. (2.) He spoke so as no other prophet did; for *God giveth not the Spirit by measure to him*. None can speak the words of God, without the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. The Old Testament prophets had the Spirit, and in different degrees, 2 Kings ii. 9, 10. But whereas God gave them the Spirit by *measure*, 1 Cor. xii. 4. he gave him to Christ *without measure*; all fulness dwelt in him, the fulness of the Godhead, an unmeasurable fulness. The Spirit was not in Christ as in a vessel, but as in a fountain, as in a bottomless ocean. "The prophets that had the Spirit in a limited manner, only with respect to some particular revelation, sometimes spake of themselves, but he that had the Spirit always residing in him without stint, always spake the words of God. So Dr. Whitby".

3. Concerning the *power and authority he is invested with*, which gives him the preeminence above all others, and a more excellent name than they.

1. He is the *beloved Son of the Father*, ver. 35. *The Father loveth the Son*. The prophets were faithful as servants, but Christ as a Son; they were employed as servants, but Christ *beloved* as a Son, always *his delight*, Prov. viii. 30. The Father was well pleased in him; not only he *did* love him, but he *doth* love him; he continued his love to him even in his estate of humiliation, loved him never the less for his poverty and sufferings.

2. He is *Lord of all*. The Father, as an evidence of his love to him, *hath given all things into his hand*. Love is generous. The Father took such a complacency, and had such a confidence in him, that he constituted him the great *feoffee in trust* for mankind. Having given him the Spirit *without measure*, he gave him *all things*, for he was thereby qualified to be master and manager of all. Note, It is the honour of Christ, and the unspeakable comfort of all Christians, that the Father hath given *all things* into the hand of the Mediator. (1.) All *power*; so it is explained, Matt. xxviii. 18. All the works of creation being put under his feet, all the affairs of redemption are put into his hand; he is Lord of all. Angels are his servants, devils are his captives. He has *power over all flesh*; the *heathen* given him for his inheritance. The kingdom of providence is committed to his administration. He has power to settle the terms of the covenant of peace as the great *plenipotentiary*, to govern his church as the great *law-giver*, to dispense divine favours as the great *almoner*, and to call all to account as the great *judge*. Both the golden sceptre and the iron rod are given into his hand. (2.) All *grace* is given into his hand as the channel of conveyance; *all things*, i. e. all those good things which God intended to give to the children of men; *eternal life*, and all its preliminaries. We are unworthy that the Father should give those things into our hands, for we have made ourselves the children of his wrath; he hath therefore appointed the *Son of his love* to be trustee for us, and the things he intended for us, he gives into his hands, who is worthy, and has merited both honours for himself, and favours for us. They are given into his hands, by him to be given into ours. This is a great encouragement to faith, that the riches of the new covenant are deposited in so sure, so kind, so good a hand, the hand of him that purchased them for us, and us for himself; who is able to keep all that which both God and believers have agreed to commit to him.

3. He is the object of that faith which is made the great condition of eternal happiness, and herein he has the preeminence above all others, ver. 36. *He that believeth on the Son hath life*. We have here the application of what he had said concerning Christ and his doctrine, and it is the *conclusion of the whole matter*. If God has put this honour upon the Son, we must by faith give honour to him. As God offers and conveys good things to us by the *testimony* of Jesus Christ, whose word is the vehicle of divine favours, so we receive and partake of those favours, by *believing* the testimony, and entertaining that word as *true and good*; this way of receiving fitly answers that way of giving. We have here the sum of that gospel, which is to be preached to every creature, Mark xvi. 16. Here is,

1. The blessed state of all true Christians, *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life*. Note, 1. It is the character of every true Christian, that he believes on the *Son of God*; not only believes him, that what he saith is true, but believes on him, consents



consents to him, and confides in him. The benefit of true Christianity is no less than *everlasting life*; that is it which Christ came to purchase for us, and confer upon us; it can be no less than the happiness of an immortal soul in an immortal God. 3. True believers, even now, *have everlasting life*; not only they shall have it hereafter, but they have it now. For, (1.) They have very good security for it. 2. The deed by which it passeth, is sealed and delivered to them, and so they have it; it is put into the hands of their guardian for them, and so they have it, though the use be not yet transferred into possession. They have the Son of God, and in him *they have life*; and the Spirit of God the earnest of this life. (2.) They have the comfortable *foretastes* of it, in present communion with God, and the tokens of his love. Grace is glory begun.

2. The wretched and miserable condition of unbelievers. *He that believeth not the Son* is undone, *ὁ ἀπεθνήσκει*. The word includes both *incredulity*, and *disobedience*. An unbeliever is one that gives not credit to the doctrine of Christ, nor is in subjection to the government of Christ. Now those that will neither be taught nor ruled by Christ, (1.) They cannot be happy in this world, or that to come; *he shall not see life*, that life which Christ came to bestow. He shall not enjoy it, he shall not have any comfortable *prospect* of it, shall never come within ken of it, except to aggravate his loss of it. (2.) They cannot but be miserable; the wrath of God *abides upon* an unbeliever. He is not only under the *wrath of God*, which is as surely *the soul's death*, as his favour is *its life*; but it *abides upon him*. All the wrath he has made himself liable to by the violation of the law, if not removed by the grace of the gospel, is *bound upon him*. God's wrath for his daily actual transgressions, lights and lies upon him. Old scores lie undischarged, and new ones added. Something done every day to fill the measure, and nothing to empty it. Thus the wrath of God *abides*, for it is *treasured up against the day of wrath*.

#### CHAP. IV.

*It was more than any thing else the glory of the land of Israel, that it was Immanuel's land, Isa. viii. 9. Not only the place of his birth, but the scene of his preaching and miracles. This land in our Saviour's time was divided into three parts; Judea in the south, Galilee in the north, and Samaria lying between them. Now in this chapter we have Christ in each of these three parts of that land. 1. Departing out of Judea, ver. 1—3. 2. Passing through Samaria, which though a visit in transitu, here takes up most room. (1.) His coming into Samaria, ver. 4—6. (2.) His discourse with the Samaritan woman at a well, ver. 7—26. (3.) The notice which the woman gave of him to the city, ver. 27—30. (4.) Christ's talk with his disciples in the mean time, ver. 31—38. (5.) The good effect of this among the Samaritans, ver. 39—42. 3. We find him residing for some time in Galilee, ver. 43—46. and his curing of a nobleman's son there that was at death's door, ver. 46—54.*

1. **W**HEN therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, 2. (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but *his disciples*) 3. He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.

We read of Christ's coming into Judea, chap. iii. 22. after he had kept the feasts at Jerusalem; and now he left Judea four months before harvest, as is said here, ver. 35. so that it is computed he staid in Judea about six months, to build upon the foundation John had laid there. We have no particular account of his sermons and miracles there, only in general, ver. 1.

1. That he *made disciples*; he prevailed with many to embrace his doctrine, and to follow him as a teacher come from God. His ministry was successful, notwithstanding the opposition it met with, Psal. cx. 3. *μαθητὰς ποιεῖ*; it signifies the same with *μαθητεύω*, to *disciple*. Compare Gen. xii. 5. *The souls which they had gotten*; which they had *made*; so the word is, which they had *made proselytes*. Note, It is Christ's prerogative to *make disciples*: First to bring them to his foot, and then form and fashion them to his will. *Fit, non nascitur Christianus*. Tertull.

2. That he *baptized* those whom he *made disciples*; admitted them by *washing them with water*; not himself, but by the ministry of his disciples, ver. 2. (1.) Because he would put a difference between his baptism and that of John, who baptized all himself; for he baptized as a servant, Christ as a master. (2.) He would apply himself more to preaching work, which was the more excellent, 1 Cor. i. 17. (3.) He would put honour upon his disciples, by empowering and employing them to do it; and to train them up to further services. (4.) If he had baptized some himself, they would have been apt to value themselves upon No. xciii.

that, and despise others, which he would prevent, as Paul, 1 Cor. i. 13, 14. (5.) He would reserve himself for the honour of baptizing with the Holy Ghost, Acts i. 5. (6.) He would teach us that the efficacy of sacraments depends not on any virtue in the hand that administers them; as also, that what is done by his ministers according to his direction, he owns as done by himself.

3. That he made and baptized *more disciples than John*; not only more than John did at this time, but more than he had done at any time. Christ's converse was more winning than John's. His miracles were convincing, and the cures he wrought *gratis* very inviting.

4. That the Pharisees were informed of this; they heard what multitudes he baptized, for they had from his first appearing a jealous eye upon him, and wanted not spies to give them notice concerning him. Observe, (1.) When the Pharisees thought they had got rid of John, (for he was by this time clapped up) and were pleasing themselves with that, Jesus appears, who was a greater vexation to them than ever John had been. The witnesses will rise again. (2.) That which grieved them, was, that Christ made so many disciples. The success of the gospel exasperates its enemies, and it is a good sign it is getting ground when the powers of darkness are enraged against it.

5. That our Lord Jesus knew very well what informations were given in against him to the Pharisees. It is likely, the informers were willing to have their names concealed, and the Pharisees loth to have their designs known; but none can dig so deep as to *hide their counsels from the Lord*, Isa. xxix. 15. and Christ is here called *the Lord*. He knew what was told the Pharisees, and how much, it is likely, it exceeded the truth; for it is not likely that Jesus had yet baptized *more than John*; but so the thing was represented to make him appear the more formidable; see 2 Kings vi. 12.

6. That hereupon our Lord Jesus *left Judea*, and *departed again* to go to Galilee.

1. He *left Judea*, because he was likely to be persecuted there, even to the death, such was the rage of the Pharisees against him, and such their impious politicks to devour the man-child in his infancy. To escape their designs Christ quitted the country, and went thither, where what he did would be less provoking than just under their nose. For, (1.) His hour was not yet come, (John vii. 38.) the time fixed in the counsels of God, and the Old Testament prophecies for Messiah's being cut off. He had not finished his testimony, and therefore would not surrender or expose himself. (2.) The disciples he had gathered in Judea were not able to bear hardships, and therefore he would not expose them. (3.) Hereby he gave an example to his own rule; *When they persecute you in one city flee to another*. We are not called to suffer, while we may avoid it without sin; and therefore, though we may not for our own preservation change our religion, yet we may change our place. Christ secured himself not by miracle, but in a way *common to men*, for the direction and encouragement of his suffering people.

2. He departed into Galilee, because he had work to do there, and many friends, and fewer enemies. He went to Galilee now, (1.) Because John's ministry had now *made way* for him there; for Galilee, which was under Herod's jurisdiction, was the last scene of John's baptism. (2.) Because John's imprisonment had now *made room* for him there: That light being now put under a bushel, the minds of people would not be divided between him and Christ. Thus both the liberties and restraints of good ministers are for the furtherance of the gospel, Phil. i. 12. But to what purpose doth he go into Galilee for safety? Herod, the persecutor of John, will never be the protector of Jesus. Chemnitius here notes, *Pii in hac vita quos fugiant, habent, ad quos vero fugiant ut in tuto sint non habent, nisi ad te, Deus, qui solus refugium nostrum es*.

4. And he must needs go through Samaria. 5. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6. Now Jacobs well was there. Jesus therefore being wearied with *his journey*, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. 7. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. 8. For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat. 9. Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. 10. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. 11. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? 12. Art thou greater



greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? 13. Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. 15. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. 16. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. 17. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: 18. For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. 19. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. 20. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. 22. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. 25. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. 26. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee, am he.

We have here an account of the good Christ did in Samaria, when he *passed through* that country in his way to Galilee. The Samaritans, both in *blood* and *religion*, were *mongrel Jews*; the posterity of those colonies which the king of Assyria planted there after the captivity of the ten tribes, with whom the poor of the land that were left behind, and many other Jews afterwards, incorporated themselves. They worshipped the God of Israel only, to whom they erected a temple on mount Gerizzim, in competition with that at Jerusalem. There was great enmity between them and the Jews; the Samaritans would not admit Christ when they saw he was going to Jerusalem, *Luke ix. 53*. The Jews thought they could not give him a worse name, than to say, *He is a Samaritan*. When the Jews were in prosperity the Samaritans claimed kindred to them, *Exra iv. 2*. but when they were in distress they were Medes and Persians; see *Joseph. Antiq. l. 11. c. 8. l. 12. c. 7*. Now observe,

1. Christ's coming into Samaria. He charged his disciples not to enter into any city of the Samaritans, *Matt. x. 5*. viz. not to preach the gospel, or work miracles; nor did he here preach publicly, or work any miracle, his eye being to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*. But what kindness he here did them was *accidental*; it was only a *crumb* of the childrens bread that casually fell from the master's table.

1. His road from Judea to Galilee lay through the country of Samaria, *ver. 4*. He *must needs* go through Samaria. There was no other way unless he would have fetched a compass on the other side *Jordan*, a great way about. The wicked and profane are at present so intermixed with God's Israel, that unless we will go out of the world, we cannot avoid going through the company of such, *1 Cor. v. 10*. We have therefore need of the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, that we may neither give provocation to them, nor contract pollution by them. We should not go into places of temptation but when we *needs must*; and then we should not reside in them, but *hasten through* them. Some think that therefore Christ *must needs* go through Samaria, because of the good work he had to do there; a poor woman to be converted, a lost sheep to be sought and saved: This was work his heart was upon, and therefore he *must needs* go this way. It was happy for Samaria that it lay in Christ's way, which gave him an opportunity of calling on them. *When I passed by thee, I said unto thee, live*, *Ezek. xvi. 6*.

2. His baiting place happened to be at a city of Samaria. Now observe,

1. The place described. It was called Sychar; probably the same with Sichem, or Shechem, a place which we read much of in the Old Testament. Thus are the names of places commonly corrupted by tract of time. Shechem yielded the first proselytes that ever came into the church of Israel, *Gen. xxxiv. 29*. — *xxxv. 2*. and now it is the first place where the gospel is preached out of the commonwealth of Israel; so Dr. Lightfoot observes; as also that the valley of Achor, which was given for a door of hope, hope to the poor Gentiles, ran along by this city, *Hos. ii. 15*. Abimelech was made king here; it was Jeroboam's royal seat;

but the evangelist, when he would give us the antiquities of the place, takes notice of Jacob's interest there, which was more its honour, than its crowned heads. 1. Here lay Jacob's ground, the *parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph*, whose bones were buried in it, *Gen. xlviii. 22*. *Josh. xxiv. 32*. Probably this is mentioned, to intimate that Christ, when he reposed himself hard by here, took occasion from the ground which Jacob gave Joseph, to meditate on the good report which the elders by faith obtained. Jerom chose to live in the land of Canaan, that the sight of the places might affect him the more with scripture stories. 2. Here was Jacob's well which he digged, or at least used for himself and his family. We find no mention of this well in the Old Testament, but the tradition was, that it was Jacob's well.

2. The posture of our Lord Jesus at this place: *Being wearied with his journey, he sat thus on the well*. We have here our Lord Jesus,

1. Labouring under the common fatigue of travellers: He was *wearied with his journey*. Though it was yet but the sixth hour, and he had performed but half his day's journey, yet he was weary; or, *because* it was the sixth hour, the time of the heat of the day, therefore he was weary. Here we see, (1.) That he was a *true man*, and subject to the common infirmities of the human nature. Toil came in with sin, *Gen. iii. 19*. and therefore Christ having made himself a curse for us, submitted to it. (2.) That he was a *poor man*, else he might have travelled on horseback, or in a chariot. To this instance of meanness and mortification he humbled himself for us, that he went all his journeys on foot. When *servants* were on horses, *princes walked as servants on the earth*, *Eccl. x. 7*. When we are carried easily, let us think on the weariness of our Master. (3.) It should seem he was but a *tender man*, and not of a robust constitution; it should seem, his disciples were not tired, for they went into the town without any difficulty, when their Master sat down, and could not go a step further. Bodies of the finest mold are most sensible of fatigue, and can worst bear it.

2. We have him here betaking himself to the common relief of travellers; *being wearied, he sat thus on the well*. (1.) He sat on the well, an *uneasy place*, cold, and hard; he had no couch, no easy chair to repose himself in, but took to that which was *next hand*, to teach us not to be nice and curious in the conveniences of this life, but content with *mean things*. (2.) He sat thus, in an *uneasy posture*; sat carelessly; (*incuriose & negligem*) or, he sat so, as people that are wearied with travelling use to sit.

2. His discourse with a Samaritan woman, which is here recorded at large, while Christ's dispute with the doctors, and his discourse with Moses and Elias on the mount are buried in silence.

This discourse is reducible to four heads:

First, They discourse concerning the water, *ver. 7—15*. Notice is first taken of the circumstances that gave occasion to this discourse.

1. There comes a woman of Samaria to draw water. This intimates her poverty, she had no servant to be a drawer of water; and her industry, she would do it her self. See here, (1.) How God owns and approves of honest, humble diligence in our places. Christ was made known to the shepherds when they were keeping their flock. (2.) How the divine providence brings about glorious purposes by events which seem to us fortuitous and accidental. This woman's meeting with Christ at the well, may mind us of the stories of Rebekah, Rachel, and Jethro's daughter, who all met with husbands, good husbands, no worse than Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, when they came to the wells for water. (3.) How the preventing grace of God sometimes brings people unexpectedly under the means of conversion and salvation. He is found of them that sought him not.

2. His disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat. Hence learn a lesson, (1.) Of justice and honesty. The meat Christ eat, he bought and paid for, as Paul, *2 Thes. iii. 8*. (2.) Of daily dependence upon providence; take no thought for the morrow. Christ did not go into the city to eat, but sent his disciples to fetch his meat thither; not because he scrupled eating in a Samaritan city, but, (1.) Because he had a good work to do at that well, which might be done while they were catering. It is wisdom to fill up our vacant minutes with that which is good, that the fragments of time may not be lost. Peter, while his dinner was in getting, fell into a trance, *Acts x. 10*. (2.) Because it was more private and retired, more cheap and homely to have his dinner brought him hither, than to go into the town for it. Perhaps his purse was low, and he would teach us good husbandry; to spend according to what we have, and not go beyond it: However, he would teach us not to affect great things. Christ could eat his dinner as well upon a draw well, as in the best inn in the town. Let us comport with our circumstances.

Now this gave Christ an opportunity of discoursing with this woman about spiritual concerns, and he improved it; he often preached to multitudes that crowded after him for instruction, yet here he condescends to teach a single person, a woman, a poor



poor woman, a stranger, a Samaritan, to teach his ministers to do likewise; as those that know what a glorious achievement it is to help to save, though but *one soul* from death.

Let us observe the particulars of this discourse.

1. Jesus begins with a modest request for a draught of water; *Give me to drink*. He that *for our sakes became poor*, here becomes a beggar, that they who are in want, and cannot dig, may not be ashamed to beg. Christ asked for it, not only because he needed it, and needed her help to come at it, but because he would draw on further discourse with her; and teach us to be willing to be beholden to the meanest when there is occasion. Christ is still begging in his poor members, and a *cup of cold water*, like this here, given to them in his name, shall not lose its reward.

2. The woman, though she doth not deny his request, yet quarrels with him because he did not carry on the humour of his own nation, *ver. 9. How is it?* Observe, (1.) What a mortal feud there was between the Jews and the Samaritans; the Jews *have no dealings with the Samaritans*. The Samaritans were the *adversaries of Judah*, Ezra iv. 1. were upon all occasions mischievous to them. The Jews were extremely malicious against them, "looked upon them as having no part in the resurrection; excommunicated and cursed them by the sacred name of God; by the glorious writing of the tables, and by the curse of the upper and lower house of judgment; with this law; That no Israelite eat of any thing that is a Samaritan's, for it is as if he eat swines flesh." So Dr. Lightfoot, out of *Rabbi Tanchum*. Note, Quarrels about religion are usually the most implacable of all other. Men were made to *have dealings* one with another; but if men, because one worships at one temple, and another at another, will deny the offices of humanity and charity, and common civility, will be morose and unnatural, scornful and censorious, and this under colour of zeal for religion, they plainly shew, that however their religion may be *true*, they are not *truly religious*; but pretending to stickle for religion, subvert the design of it.

(2.) How ready the woman was to upbraid Christ with the haughtiness and ill nature of the Jewish nation: *How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me?* By his dress or dialect, or both, she knew him to be a Jew, and *thinks it strange* that he runs not to the same excess of riot against the Samaritans with other Jews. Note, Moderate men of all sides, are (like Joshua and his fellows, *Zech. iii. 8.*) *men wondered at*. Two things this woman wonders at. (1.) That he should ask this kindness; for it was the pride of Jews that they would endure any hardship rather than be beholden to a Samaritan. It was part of Christ's humiliation, that he was born of the Jewish nation which was now not only in an *ill state*, subject to the Romans, but in an *ill name* among the nations: With what disdain did Pilate ask, *Am I a Jew?* Thus he made himself not only of *no reputation*, but of *ill reputation*; but herein he has set us an example, of swimming against the stream of common corruptions. We must, like our Master, put on *goodness*, and *kindness*, though it should be never so much the genius of our country, or the humour of our party, to be morose and ill-natured. This woman expected that Christ should be as other Jews were; but it is unjust to charge upon every individual person, even the common faults of the community: No rule but has some exceptions. (2.) She wonders he should expect to receive this kindness from her that was a Samaritan: You Jews could deny it to one of our nation, and why should we grant it to one of your's? Thus quarrels are propagated endlessly by revenge and retaliation.

3. Christ takes this occasion to instruct her in divine things; *ver. 10. If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldst have asked*. Observe, (1.) He waves her objection of the feud between the Jews and Samaritans, and takes no notice of it. Some differences are best healed by being *sighted*, and by avoiding all occasions of entering into dispute about them. Christ will convert this woman, not by shewing her that the Samaritan worship was *schismatical*, though really it was so, but by shewing her, her own ignorance, and immoralities, and her need of a Saviour. (2.) He possesseth her with an apprehension that she had now an opportunity (a fairer opportunity than she was aware of) of gaining that which would be of unspeakable advantage to her. She had not the helps that the Jews had to discern the signs of the times, and therefore Christ tells her expressly, she had now a season of grace; this was the *day of her visitation*.

(1.) He hints to her what she *should know*, but was ignorant of. *If thou knewest the gift of God*, that is, as the next words explain it, *Who it is that saith, give me to drink*. If thou knewest *who I am*: She saw him to be a Jew, a poor weary traveller, but he would have her know something more concerning him than did yet appear. Note, (1.) Jesus Christ is the *gift of God*; the richest token of God's love to us, and the richest treasure of all good for us. A gift, not a debt which we could demand from God; not a loan, which he will demand from us again, but a gift, a free gift, *John iii. 16*. (2.) It is an unspeakable privilege to have this gift of God proposed and offered to us; to have an opportunity of embracing it. He who is the gift of God is now set before thee, and addresseth himself to thee; it is he that saith, *give me to drink*; this gift comes a begging to

thee. (3.) Though Christ is set before us, and fues to us in and by his gospel, yet there are multitudes that *know him not*. They know not who it is that speaks to them in the gospel, that saith, *give me to drink*; they perceive not that it is the Lord that calls them.

(2.) He hopes concerning her, what she would have done if she had known him; to be sure she would not have given him such a rude and uncivil answer; nay, she would have been so far from affronting him, that she would have made her addresses to him. *Thou wouldst have asked*. Note, (1.) Those that would have any benefit by Christ, must ask for it, must be earnest in prayer to God for it. 2. Those that have a right knowledge of Christ will seek to him, and if we do not seek unto him, it is a sign we do not know him, *Psal. ix. 10*. (3.) Christ knows what they that want the means of knowledge would have done, if they had had them, *Matt. xi. 21*.

(3.) He assures her what he would have done for her, if she had applied herself to him. He *would have given thee* (and not have upbraided thee, as thou dost me) *living water*. By this living water is meant the Spirit, who is not like the water in the bottom of the well, which he asked for some of, but like *living*, or *running* water, which was much more valuable. Note, 1. The Spirit of grace is as *living water*; see *John vii. 38*. Under this similitude the blessings of the Messiah had been promised in the Old Testament, *Isa. xlii. 3. — xxxv. 7. — xlii. 3. — lv. 1. Zech. xiv. 8*. The graces of the Spirit, and his comforts, satisfy the thirsting soul that knows its own nature and necessity. 2. Jesus Christ *can* and *will* give the holy Spirit to them that ask him; for he *received* that he might give.

4. The woman objects against, and cavils at, the gracious intimation which Christ gave her, *ver. 11, 12. Thou hast nothing to draw with*; and besides, *Art thou greater than our father Jacob?* What he spoke figuratively, she took literally; Nicodemus did so too. See what confused notions they have of spiritual things, who are wholly taken up with the things that are sensible. Some respect she pays to his person, in calling him *Sir*, or *Lord*; but little respect to what he said, which she doth but banter.

1. She doth not think him capable of furnishing her with any water, no, not this in the well, that is just at hand: *Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep*. This she said, not knowing the power of Christ, for he who *causeth the vapours* to ascend from the ends of the earth, needs *nothing to draw*. But there are those who will trust Christ no further than they can see him, and will not believe his promise, unless the means of the performance of it be *visible*; as if he were tied to our methods, and could not draw water without our buckets. She asks scornfully, *Whence hast thou this living water?* I see not whence thou canst have it. Note, The springs of that living water, which Christ has for those that come to him, are secret and undiscovered: The fountain of life is hid with Christ. Christ has enough for us, though we see not whence he hath it.

2. She doth not think it possible he should furnish her with any better water than this which she could come at, but he could not. *Art thou greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well?*

1. We will suppose the tradition true, that Jacob himself, and his children, and cattle did drink of this well. And we may observe from it, (1.) The power and providence of God, in the continuance of the fountains of water from generation to generation, by the constant circulation of the rivers, like the blood in the body, *Ecc. i. 7*. to which circulation, perhaps the flux and reflux of the sea, like the pulses of the heart, doth contribute. (2.) The plainness of the patriarch Jacob, his drink was water, and he and his children drank of the same well with his cattle.

2. Yet allowing that to be true, she was out in several things; as, (1.) In calling Jacob father. What authority had the Samaritans to reckon themselves of the seed of Jacob? They were descended from that mixt multitude which the king of Assyria had placed in the cities of Samaria; what have they to do then with Jacob? Because they were the *invaders* of Israel's rights, and the unjust possessors of Israel's lands; were they therefore the *inheritors* of Israel's blood and honour? How absurd were those pretensions? (2.) She is out in claiming this well as Jacob's gift, whereas he did no more give it than Moses gave the *manna*, *John vi. 32*. But thus we are apt to call the messengers of God's gifts, the donors of them; and to look so much at the hands they *pass through*, as to forget the hand they *come from*. Jacob gave it to his sons, not to *them*. Yet thus the church's enemies not only *usurp*, but monopolize the church's privileges. (3.) She was out in speaking of Christ, as not worthy to be compared with our father Jacob. An over-fond veneration for antiquity makes God's graces in the good people of our own day to be slighted.

5. Christ answers this cavil, and makes it out that the *living water* he had to give, was far better than that of Jacob's well, *ver. 13, 14*. Though she spoke perversely, Christ did not cast her off, but instructed and encouraged her. He shews her,

1. That the water of Jacob's well yielded but a *transient* satisfaction and supply: *Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again*,



again. It is no better than other water, it will quench the present thirst, but the thirst will return, and in a few hours a man will have as much need, and as much desire of water as ever he had. This speaks, (1.) The infirmities of our bodies in this present state; they are still *necessitous* and ever *craving*. Life is a fire, a lamp, which will soon go out, without continual supplies of fuel and oil: The natural heat preys upon itself. (2.) The imperfections of all our comforts in this world, they are not lasting, nor our satisfaction in them remaining. Whatever waters of comfort we drink of, we shall *thirst again*. Yesterday's meat and drink will not do to day's work.

2. That the living waters he would give, should yield a lasting satisfaction and bliss, *ver. 14*. Christ's gifts appear most valuable, when they come to be compared with the things of this world; for there will appear no comparison between them. Whoever partakes of the Spirit of grace, and the comforts of the everlasting gospel, (1.) He shall *never thirst*, he shall never want that which will abundantly satisfy his soul's desires; they are *longing*, but not *languishing*. A *desiring* thirst he has, nothing more than God, but still more and more of God; but not a *despairing* thirst. (2.) Therefore he shall never thirst, because this water that Christ gives shall be in him a well of water. He can never be reduced to extremity, that has in himself a fountain of supply and satisfaction, (1.) *Ever ready*, for it shall be in him. The principle of grace planted in him is the spring of his comfort; see *John vii. 38*. A good man is *satisfied from himself*, for Christ dwells in his heart. The anointing abides in him; he needs not sneak to the world for comfort; the *work*, and the *witness* of the Spirit in the heart, furnisheth him with a firm foundation of hope, and an over-flowing fountain of joy. (2.) *Never failing*, for it shall be in him a well of water. He that has at hand but a bucket of water, needs not thirst as long as that lasts, but that will soon be *exhausted*; but believers have in them a well of water, over-flowing, ever flowing. The principles and affections which Christ's holy religion forms in the souls of those that are captivated to the power of it, are this well of water. (1.) It is *springing up*, ever in motion, which speaks the actings of grace strong and vigorous. If good truths stagnate in our souls, like standing water, they do not answer the end of our receiving them: If there be a good treasure in the heart, we must thence bring forth good things. (2.) It is *springing up unto everlasting life*, which speaks, (1.) The aims of gracious actings. A sanctified soul has its eye upon heaven; means that, designs that, doth all for that, will take up with nothing short of that. Spiritual life springs up towards its own perfection in eternal life. (2.) The constancy of those actings, it will continue springing up till it come to perfection. (3.) The crown of them, eternal life at last. The living water riseth from heaven, and therefore riseth towards heaven; see *Eccl. i. 7*. And now, is not this water better than that of Jacob's well?

6. The woman (whether in jest or earnest is hard to say) begs of him to give her some of this water; *ver. 13*. Give me this water, that I thirst not. (1.) Some think she speaks tauntingly, and ridicules what Christ had said as meer stuff, and in derision of it, not *desires*, but *challengeth* him to give her some of this water. A rare invention; it will save me a deal of pain if I thirst not, and a deal of pains if I never come hither to draw. But, (2.) Others think it was a well meant, but weak and ignorant desire. She apprehended that he meant something very good and useful, and therefore said *amen* at a venture. *Whatever it be*, let me have it; *who will shew me any good?* And ease or saving of labour is a valuable good to poor labouring people. Note, 1. Even those that are weak and ignorant, may yet have some faint and fluctuating desires towards Christ and his gifts, and some good wishes of grace and glory. 2. Carnal hearts, in their best wishes, look no higher than carnal ends. Give it me, faith she, not that I may have everlasting life, which Christ proposed, but that I come not hither to draw.

Secondly, The next subject of discourse with this woman, is concerning her husband, *ver. 16, 17, 18*. It was not to let fall the discourse of the water of life, that Christ started this, as many who will bring in any *impertinence* in conversation, that they may drop a serious subject; but it was with a gracious design that Christ mentioned it. What he had said concerning his grace and eternal life, he found had made little impression upon her, because she had not been convinced of sin; therefore waving the discourse about the living water, he sets himself to awaken her conscience, to open the wound of guilt, and then she would more easily apprehend the remedy by grace. And this is the method of dealing with souls; they must first be made *weary* and *heavy laden* under the burthen of sin, and then brought to Christ for rest; first pricked to the heart, and then healed. This is the course of spiritual physick, and if we proceed not in this order, we begin at the wrong end.

Observe, 1. How discreetly and decently Christ introduceth this discourse, *ver. 16*. Go call thy husband and come hither. Now, (1.) This order Christ gave her, had a very good colour. Call thy husband, that he may teach thee, and help thee to understand these things, which thou art so ignorant of. The wives that will learn, must ask their husbands, 1 *Cor. xiv. 35*. who must dwell with them, as men of knowledge, 1 *Pet. iii. 7*. Call thy

husband, that he may learn with thee; that then ye may be heirs together of the grace of life. Call thy husband, that he may be witness to what passeth between us; Christ would thus teach us to provide things honest in the sight of all men, and to study that which is of good report. (2.) As it had a good colour, so it had a good design, for from hence he would take occasion to call her sin to remembrance. There is need of art and prudence in giving reproofs to fetch a compass, as the woman of Tekoa, 2 *Sam. xiv. 20*.

2. How industriously the woman seeks to evade the conviction, and yet insensibly convicts her self, and ere she is aware, owns her fault; she said, *I have no husband*. Her saying this intimated no more, but that she did not care to have her husband spoken of, nor that matter mentioned any more. She would not have her husband come thither, lest in further discourse, the truth of the matter should come out to her shame, and therefore pray go on to talk of something else, *I have no husband*; she would be thought a maid or a widow, whereas, though she had no husband, she was neither. The carnal mind is very ingenious to shift off convictions, and to keep them from fastening; careful to cover the sin.

3. How closely our Lord Jesus brings home the conviction to her conscience. It is probable, he said more than is here recorded, for she thought he told her all that ever she did, *ver. 29*. but that which is here recorded is concerning her husbands: Here is, (1.) A surprising narrative of her past conversation; *thou hast had five husbands*. Doubtless it was not her affliction, the burying of so many husbands, but her sin, that Christ intended to upbraid her with; either she had eloped (as the law speaks) had over-run her husbands, and married others, or by her undutiful, unclean disloyal carriage, had provoked them to divorce her, or by indirect means, had, contrary to law, divorced them. Those who make light of such scandalous practices as these, as no more but *nine days wonder*, and as if the guilt were over as soon as the talk is over, should remember that Christ keeps account of all. (2.) A severe reproof of her present state of life; *He whom thou hast is not thy husband*: Either she was never married to him at all, or he had some other wife; or, which is most probable, her former husband, or husbands were living; so that in short, she lived in adultery. Yet observe how mildly Christ tells her of it; he doth not call her a whore, but tells her, *he with whom thou livest is not thy husband*; and then leaves it to her own conscience to tell her so. Note, Reproofs are ordinarily most profitable when they are least provoking. (3.) Yet in this he puts a better construction than it would well bear upon what she said by way of shuffle and evasion; *thou hast well said, I have no husband*; and again, in that saidst thou truly. What she intended as a denial of the fact, that she had none with whom she lived as a husband, he favourably interpreted, or at least turned upon her as a confession of the fault. Note, Those who would win souls, should make the best of them, whereby they may hope to work upon their good nature; for if they make the worst of them, they certainly exasperate their ill nature.

Thirdly, the next subject of discourse with this woman, is concerning the place of worship, *ver. 19—24*. where we may observe,

1. A case of conscience proposed to Christ, by the woman, concerning the place of worship, *ver. 19, 20*. And there,

1. The inducement she had to put this case; *Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet*. She doth not deny the truth of what he had charged her with, but by her silence owns the justice of the reproof; nor is she put into a passion by it, as many are when they are touched in a sore place; doth not impute his censure to the general disgust the Jews had to the Samaritans; but (which is a rare thing) can bear to be told of a fault. But that is not all, she goes further, (1.) She speaks respectfully to him, calls him *Sir*. Thus should we honour those that deal faithfully with us. This was the effect of Christ's meekness in reproving her; he gave her no ill language, and then she made him none. (2.) She acknowledges him to be a prophet, one that had a correspondence with heaven. Note, The power of the word of Christ in searching the heart, and convincing the conscience of secret sins, is a great proof of its divine authority, 1 *Cor. xiv. 24, 25*. (3.) She desires some further instruction from him. Many that are not angry at their reprovers, nor fly in their faces, yet are afraid of them, and keep out of their way; but this woman was willing to have some more discourse with him that told her of her faults.

2. The case it self that she propounded concerning the place of religious worship in publick. Some think she started this to shift off further discourse concerning her sin. Controversies in religion often prove great prejudices to serious godliness; but it should seem she proposed it with a good design; she knew she must worship God, and desired to do it aright; and therefore meeting with a prophet begs his direction. Note, It is our wisdom to improve all opportunities of getting knowledge in the things of God. When we are in company with those that are fit to teach, let us be forward to learn; and have a good question ready to put to those who are able to give a good answer.

It was agreed between the Jews and the Samaritans, that God is to be worshipped; those who were such fools as to worship false



false gods, yet were not such brutes as to worship none; and that religious worship is an affair of great importance: men would not contend about it, if they were not concerned about it. But the matter in variance was, *where* they should worship God. Observe how she states the case;

1. As for the Samaritans; *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain*, near adjoining to this city, and this well; there the Samaritan temple was built by Sanballat; in favour of which she insinuates, (1.) That whatever the temple was, the place was holy; it was mount Gerizim, the mountain on which the blessings were pronounced; and some think the same on which Abraham built his altar, *Gen. xii. 6, 7.* and Jacob his, *Gen. xxxiii. 18.* (2.) That it might plead prescription, for *our fathers* worshipped here. She thinks they have antiquity, tradition, and succession, on their side: A *vain conversation* oft supports itself with this, that it was *received by tradition from our fathers*. But she had little reason to boast of *their fathers*, for when Antiochus persecuted the Jews, the Samaritans, for fear of sharing with them in their sufferings, not only renounced all relation to the Jews, but surrendered their temple to Antiochus, with a request that it might be dedicated to Jupiter Olympius, and called by his name. *Joseph. Antiq. l. 12. c. 7.*

2. As to the Jews; ye say, that *in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship*. The Samaritans governed themselves by the five books of Moses, and (some think) received *them only* as canonical: Now though they found frequent mention there of the place God would chuse, yet they did not find it named there; and they saw the temple at Jerusalem stripped of many of its ancient glories, and therefore think themselves at liberty to set up another place; altar against altar.

2. Christ's answer to this case of conscience, *ver. 21, &c.* Those that apply themselves to Christ for instruction, shall find him meek, to teach the meek his way. Now here,

1. He puts a *slight* upon the question, as she had proposed it, concerning the place of worship, *ver. 21. Woman, believe me*, as a prophet, and mark what I say, Thou art expecting the *hour to come*, when either by some divine revelation, or some signal providence, this matter shall be decided in favour either of Jerusalem, or of mount Gerizim, but I tell thee, the hour is at hand, when it shall be no more a question; that which thou hast been taught to lay so much weight on, shall be set aside as a thing *indifferent*. Note, It should cool us in our contests, to think that those things which now fill us, and which we make such a noise about, shall shortly *vanish*, and be *no more*; the very things we are striving about are passing away. *The hour comes, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.* (1.) The object of worship is supposed to continue still the same, *God*, as a Father; under that notion the very heathens worshipped God, the Jews did so, and probably the Samaritans. (2.) But a period shall be put to all niceness, and all differences about the place of worship. The approaching dissolution of the Jewish oeconomy, and the erecting of the evangelical state, shall set this matter *at large*, and lay all *in common*, so that it shall be a thing perfectly indifferent, whether in either of these places, or any other, men worship God, for they shall not be tied to any place; neither *here* nor *there*, but *both*, and *any where*, and *every where*. Note, The worship of God is not now under the gospel appropriated to any place, as it was under the law, but it is God's will that men pray every where, *1 Tim. ii. 8. Mal. i. 11.* Our reason teacheth us to consult *decency* and *convenience* in the places of our worship; but our religion gives no preference to one place above another in respect of holiness, and acceptableness to God. They who prefer any worship, merely for the sake of the house or building in which it is performed (though it were as magnificent, and as *solemnly* consecrated as ever Solomon's temple was) forget that the *hour is come*, when there should be no difference put in God's account; no not between Jerusalem, which *had been* so famous for sanctity, and the mountain of Samaria, which *had been* so infamous for impiety.

2. He lays a *stress* upon other things in the matter of religious worship. When he made so light of the place of worship, he did not intend to lessen our concern about the thing itself, which therefore he takes occasion to discourse of more fully.

1. As to the present state of the controversy he determines against the Samaritan worship, and in favour of the Jews, *ver. 22.* He tells her here,

(1.) That the Samaritans are certainly *in the wrong*; not merely because they worshipped in this mountain, though while Jerusalem's choice was in force, that was sinful, but because they were out in the object of their worship; if the worship itself had been as it should be, its separation from Jerusalem might have been connived at as the *high places* were in the best reigns, but *ye worship ye know not what*; or, *that which ye do not know*; they worshipped the God of Israel, the true God, *Ezra iv. 2. 2 Kings xvii. 32.* but they were sunk into gross ignorance; they worshipped him as the *God of that land*, *2 Kings xvii. 27, 33.* as a local deity, like the gods of the nations, whereas God must be served *as God*, as the universal cause and Lord. Note, Ignorance is so far from being the mother of devotion, that it is the mur-

therer of it. Those that worship God *ignorantly*, offer the *blind* for sacrifice, and it is the *sacrifice of fools*.

(2.) That the Jews were certainly *in the right*. For,

(1.) *We know what we worship*. We go upon sure grounds in our worship, for our people are catechized and trained up in the knowledge of God, as he has revealed himself in the scripture. Note, Those who by the scriptures have obtained some knowledge of God (a *certain*, though not a *perfect* knowledge) may worship him *comfortably* to themselves, and *acceptably* to him, for they *know what they worship*. Christ elsewhere condemns the corruptions of the Jews worship, *Matt. xv. 9.* and yet here defends the worship itself; the worship may be *true*, where yet it is not *pure* and *entire*. Observe, Our Lord Jesus was pleased to reckon himself among the *worshippers* of God; *we worship*. *Though he were a son* (and then are the children free) *yet learned he this obedience* in the days of his humiliation. Let not the greatest of men think the worship of God below them, when the Son of God himself did not.

(2.) *Salvation is of the Jews*, and therefore they know what they worship, and what ground they go upon in their worship. Not that all the Jews were saved, or that it was not possible but that many of the Gentiles and Samaritans might be saved, for in *every nation*, he that fears God, and works righteousness, is *accepted of him*; But, (1.) The author of eternal salvation comes of the Jews, and appears among them, *Rom. ix. 8.* and is sent first to *bless* them. (2.) The means of eternal salvation are afforded to them. The *word of salvation* (*Acts xiii. 26.*) was *of the Jews*. It was delivered to them, and was through them derived to other nations. This was a sure guide to them in their devotions, and they followed it, and therefore knew what they worshipped. To them were committed the *oracles of God*, *Rom. iii. 2.* and the *service of God*, *Rom. ix. 4.* The Jews therefore being thus privileged and advanced, it was presumption for the Samaritans to vye with them.

2. He describes the evangelical worship, and which only God would accept of, and be well pleased with; having shewed that the place is *indifferent*, he comes to shew what is *necessary* and *essential*. That we worship God *in Spirit and in truth*, *ver. 23, 24.* The stress is not to be laid upon the place where we worship God, but with what *mind* we worship him. Note, The most effectual way to take up differences in the *lesser* matters of religion, is to be more *zealous* in the *greater*. They who daily make it the matter of their *care* to worship *in the spirit*, one would think, should not make it the matter of their *strife*, whether he should be worshipped *here* or *there*. Christ had justly preferred the Jewish worship before the Samaritan, yet here he intimates the imperfection of that. The worship was *ceremonial*, *Heb. ix. 1, 10.* The worshippers were generally *carnal*, and much strangers to the *inward part* of divine worship. Note, It is possible we may be better than our neighbours, and yet not so good as we should be. It concerns us to be right, not only in the *objects* of our worship, but in the *manner* of it; and that is it which Christ here instructs us in. Observe,

1. The great and glorious revolution which should introduce this change. *The hour cometh, and now is*. The fixed, stated time, concerning which it was of old determined, when it should come, and how long it should last. The time of its *appearance* is *fixed* to an hour, so punctual and exact are the divine counsels; the time of its *continuance* is *limited* to an hour, so close and pressing is the opportunity of divine grace, *2 Cor. vi. 2.* This hour *cometh*, it is coming in its full strength, lustre, and perfection, it *now is* in the embryo and infancy. *The perfect day is coming*, and now it *dawns*. 2. The blessed change itself. In gospel times the *true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit, and in truth*. As creatures we worship the Father of *all*: As Christians we worship the Father of our Lord Jesus. Now the change shall be, (1.) In the *nature* of the worship, Christians shall worship God, not in the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic institution, but in *spiritual* ordinances, consisting less in *bodily exercise*, and animated and invigorated more with a divine power and energy. The way of worship Christ has instituted is rational and intellectual, and refined from those external rites and ceremonies with which the Old Testament worship was both *clouded* and *clogged*. This is called *true* worship, in opposition to that which was *typical*: The legal services were *figures of the true*, *Heb. ix. 9, 24.* They that revolted from Judaism to Christianity, are said to *begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh*, *Gal. iii. 3.* Such was the difference between Old Testament and New Testament institutions.

(2.) In the *temper* and *disposition* of the worshippers; and so the *true worshippers* are good Christians, distinguished from hypocrites; *all should*, and they will worship God *in spirit and in truth*. It is spoken of, *ver. 23.* as their character, and *ver. 24.* as their duty. Note, It is required of all that worship God, that they worship him *in spirit and in truth*. (1.) We must worship God *in spirit*, *Phil. iii. 3.* We must depend upon *God's Spirit* for strength and assistance, laying our souls under his influences and operations; we must devote *our own spirits* to, and employ them in the service of God, *Rom. i. 9.* must worship him with fixedness of thought, and a flame of affection; with *all that is within us*. Spirit is sometimes put for the new nature, in opposition to



the *flesh*, which is the corrupt nature, and so to worship God *with our spirit*, is to worship him *with our graces*, Heb. xii. 28. (2.) In *truth*, that is, in *sincerity*; God requires not only the *inward part* in our worship, but *truth in the inward part*, Psal. li. 6. We must mind the power more than the form; must aim at God's glory, and not to be *seen of men*; draw near with a *true heart*, Heb. x. 22.

3. The reasons why God must be thus worshipped.

1. Because in gospel times they, and they only, are accounted the *true worshippers*. The gospel erects a spiritual way of worship, so that the professors of the gospel are not true in their profession, do not live up to gospel light and laws, if they do not worship God *in spirit and in truth*.

2. Because *the Father seeketh such worshippers of him*. This intimates, (1.) That such worshippers are very rare, and seldom met with, Jer. xxx. 21. The gate of spiritual worshipping is strait. (2.) That such worship is necessary, and what the God of heaven insists upon. When God comes to *enquire* for worshippers, the question will not be, who worshipped at Jerusalem? But who worshipped in spirit, that will be the touch-stone. (3.) That God is greatly well pleased with, and graciously accepts, of such worship, and such worshippers. *I have desired it*, Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14. Cant. ii. 14. (4.) That there has been, and will be to the end, a remnant of such worshippers; his *seeking* such worshippers implies his *making* them such; God is in all ages gathering in to himself a generation of spiritual worshippers.

3. Because *God is a spirit*. Christ came to *declare God* to us, John i. 18. And this he has declared concerning him, he declared it to this poor Samaritan woman, for the meanest are concerned to know God, and with this design to rectify her mistakes concerning religious worship; to which nothing would contribute more than the right knowledge of God. Note, 1. *God is a spirit*, for he is an infinite and eternal mind; an intelligent Being, incorporeal, immaterial, invisible, and incorruptible. It is easier to say what God is not, than what he is; a spirit *has not flesh and bones*; but *who knows the way of a spirit*? If God were not a spirit, he could not be perfect, nor infinite, nor eternal, nor independent, nor the Father of spirits. (2.) The spirituality of the divine nature is a very good reason for the spirituality of divine worship. If we do not worship God who is a spirit, *in the spirit*, we neither give him the glory due to his name, and so do not perform the *act* of worship; nor can we hope to obtain his favour and acceptance, and so we miss of the end of worship, Matt. xv. 8, 9.

Fourthly, The last subject of discourse with this woman, is concerning the Messiah, ver. 25, 26. Observe here,

1. The faith of the woman by which she expected the Messiah; *I know that Messiah cometh — and he will tell us all things*. She had nothing to object against what Christ had said; his discourse was, for ought she knew, what might become the Messiah then expected; but *from him* she would receive it, and in the mean time thinks best to suspend her belief. Thus many have no heart to the price *in their hand*, (Prov. xvii. 16.) because they think they have a better *in their eye*, and deceive themselves with a promise that they will learn that *hereafter*, which they neglect now. Observe here,

(1.) Whom she expects; *I know that Messiah cometh*. The Jews and Samaritans, though so much at variance, agreed in the expectation of the Messiah, and his kingdom. The Samaritans received the writings of Moses, and were no strangers to the prophets, nor to the hopes of the Jewish nation; those who knew least, knew this, that Messiah was to come; so general and uncontested was the expectation of him; and at this time more raised than ever, for the sceptre was departed from Judah, Daniel's weeks were near expiring, so that she concludes, not only he will come, but *ερχεται*, he comes, he is just at hand, *Messias, which is called Christ*. The evangelist, though he retains the Hebrew word *Messiah*, which the woman used, in honour to the holy language, and to the Jewish church, that used it familiarly, yet writing for the use of the Gentiles, he takes care to render it by a Greek word of the same signification, *which is called Christ*, anointed; giving an example to the apostle's rule, that whatever is spoken in an unknown, or less vulgar, tongue, should be interpreted, 1 Cor. xiv. 27, 28.

(2.) What she expects from him; *He will tell us all things* relating to the service of God, which are needful for us to know; will tell us that which will supply our defects, rectify our mistakes, and put an end to all our disputes. He will tell us the mind of God fully and clearly, and keep back nothing. Now this implies an acknowledgment, (1.) Of the deficiency and imperfection of the discovery they now had of the divine will, and the rule they had of the divine worship, it *could not make the comers thereunto perfect*, and therefore they expected some great advance and improvement in matters of religion, a time of reformation. (2.) Of the sufficiency of the Messiah to make this change. He will tell us all things, which we want to know, and about which we wrangle in the dark. He will introduce peace, by leading us into all truth, and dispelling the mists of error. It seems, this was the comfort of good people in those dark times, that light would arise; if they found themselves at

a loss, and run a-ground, it was a satisfaction to them to say, *When Messiah comes, he will tell us all things*; as it may be to us now, with reference to his second coming; now we see through a glass, but then *face to face*.

2. The favour of our Lord Jesus in making himself known to her, ver. 26. *I that speak to thee, am he*. Christ did never make himself known so expressly to any, as he did here to this poor Samaritan, and to the blind man, John ix. 37. no, not to John Baptist, when he sent to him, Matt. xi. 4, 5. no, not to the Jews, when they challenged him to tell them whether he was the Christ, John x. 24. But, (1.) Christ would thus put an honour upon such as were poor and despised, James ii. 6. (2.) This woman, for ought we know, had never any opportunity of seeing Christ's miracles, which were then the ordinary method of conviction. Note, To those who have not the advantage of the *external* means of knowledge and grace, God hath *secret* ways of making up the want of them; we must therefore judge charitably concerning such; God can make the light of grace shine *into the heart*, even where he doth not make the light of the gospel shine *in the face*. (3.) This woman was better prepared to receive such a discovery than others were; she was big with expectation of the Messiah, and ready to receive instruction from him. Christ will manifest himself to those, who with an honest humble heart desire to be acquainted with him. *I that speak to thee, am he*. See here, 1. How near Jesus Christ was to her, when she knew not who he was, Gen. xxviii. 16. many are lamenting Christ's absence, and longing for his presence, when at the same time he is speaking to them. 2. How Christ makes himself known to us, by *speaking* to us. *I that speak unto thee* so closely, so convincingly, with such assurance, with such an authority, *I am he*.

27. ¶ And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? 28. The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, 29. Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? 30. Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. 31. ¶ In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. 32. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. 33. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? 34. Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. 35. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. 36. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoyce together. 37. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. 38. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. 39. ¶ And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him, for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. 40. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him, that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. 41. And many more believed, because of his own word: 42. And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

We have here the remainder of the story, of what happened when Christ was in Samaria, after the long conference he had with the woman.

First, The *interruption* given to this discourse, by the disciples coming. It is likely, much more was said than is recorded, but just when the discourse was brought to a head, when Christ had made himself known to her as the true Messiah, *then came the disciples*. The daughters of Jerusalem shall not stir up nor awake my love till he please. (1.) They admired at Christ's converse with this woman; marvelled that he talked thus earnestly (as perhaps they observed at a distance) with a woman, a strange woman, alone, he used to be more reserved, especially with a Samaritan woman, that was not of the lost sheep of the house of Israel; they thought their Master should be as shy of the Samaritans as the other Jews were, at least that he should not preach the gospel to them. They wondered he should condescend to talk with such a poor contemptible woman, forgetting what despicable men they themselves were, when Christ first called them into fellowship with himself. (2.) Yet they acquiesced in it, they knew it



it was for some good reason, and some good end, which he was not bound to give them an account of, and therefore none of them asked, *What seekest thou?* or, *Why talkest thou with her?* Thus when particular difficulties occur in the word and providence of God, it is good to satisfy ourselves with this in general, that all is well which Jesus Christ saith and doth. Perhaps there was something *amiss* in their *marvelling* that *Christ talked with the woman*, and that it was something like the Pharisees, being offended at his eating with publicans and sinners. But whatever they *thought*, they said *nothing*; *If thou hast thought evil at any time, lay thy hand upon thy mouth*, to keep that evil thought from turning into an evil word, *Prov. xxx. 32. Psal. xxxix. 1, 2, 3.*

Secondly, The notice which the woman gave to her neighbours, what an extraordinary person she had happily met with, *ver. 28, 29.* Observe here,

1. How she *forgot her errand to the well*, *ver. 28.* Therefore because the disciples were come, and broke up the discourse, and perhaps she observed they were not pleased with it, she *went her way*. She withdrew in civility to Christ, that he might have leisure to *eat his dinner*. She delighted in his discourse, but would not be *rude*, every thing is beautiful in its season. She supposed that Jesus, when he had dined, would go forward in his journey, and therefore hastened to tell her neighbours, that they might come quickly, *yet a little while is the light with you*. See how she improved time; when one good work was done, she applied herself to another. When opportunities of *getting good* cease, or are interrupted, we should seek opportunities of *doing good*; when we have done *hearing* the word, then is a time to be *speaking* of it.

Notice is taken of her *leaving her water-pot, or pail*. (1.) She left it in kindness to Christ, that he might have to drink with his dinner; and fair water was his drink; he turned water into wine for others, but not for himself. Compare this with Rebecca's civility to Abraham's servant, *Gen. xxiv. 18.* and see that promise, *Matt. x. 42.* (2.) She left it, that she might make the more haste into the city, to carry thither these good tidings. Those whose business it is to publish the name of Christ, must not encumber or entangle themselves with any thing that will retard or hinder them therein. When the disciples were to be made *fishers of men*, they must *forsake all*. (3.) She left her water-pot as one *careless of it*, being wholly taken up with better things. Note, Those who are brought to the knowledge of Christ, will shew it by a holy contempt of this world, and the things of it. And those who are *newly* acquainted with the things of God, must be *excused*, if at first they be so taken up with that new world, into which they are brought, that the things of this world seem to be for a time wholly neglected. Mr. Hilderham, in one of his sermons on this verse, from this instance, largely justifies those who leave their worldly business on week-days to go hear sermons.

2. How she *mindeth her errand to the town*, for her heart was upon it; she *went into the city*, and said to *the men*, probably the aldermen, the men in authority, whom, it may be, she found met together upon some publick business; or to *the men*, i. e. to every man she met in the streets; she proclaimed it in the chief places of concourse, *Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?* Observe,

1. How *solicitous* she was to *bring her friends and neighbours* acquainted with Christ. When she had found that treasure, she *called together her friends and neighbours*, as *Luke xv. 4.* not only to *rejoice with her*, but to share with her; knowing there was enough to enrich herself, and all that would partake with her. Note, They that have been themselves with Jesus, and have found comfort in him, should do all they can to bring others to him; has he done us the honour to make himself known to us? let us do him the honour to make him known to others; nor can we do ourselves a greater honour: This woman becomes an apostle, *Quæ scortum fuerat egressa, regreditur magistra evangelica*, saith Aretius. Christ had bid her *call her husband*, which she thought was warrant enough to *call every body*. She went into the city, the city where she dwelt, among her kinsfolks and acquaintance. Though every man is my neighbour that I have opportunity of doing good to, yet I have most *opportunity*, and therefore lie under the most *obligations* to do good to those that live near me. *Where the tree falls, there let it be made useful.*

2. How fair and ingenuous she was in the notice she gave them concerning this stranger she had met with.

(1.) She *tells them* plainly what induced her to admire him. *He has told me all things that ever I did.* No more is recorded but what he told her of her husbands; but it is not improbable he had told her more of her faults. Or, his telling her of that which she knew he could not by any ordinary means come to the knowledge of, convinced her that he could have told her of all that ever she did. If he has a *divine* knowledge, it must be an omniscience. He told her that which none knew but God, and her own conscience. Two things affected her, (1.) The *extent of his knowledge*; we ourselves cannot tell *all things that ever we did*, many things pass *unheeded*, and more pass away, and are forgotten, but Jesus Christ knows all the thoughts, words, and actions, of all the children of men, see *Heb. iv. 13.* He hath

said, *I know thy works.* (2.) The *power of his word*; this made a great impression upon her, that he told her her *secret sins* with such an unaccountable power and energy, that being told of one, she is *convinced of all, and adjudged of all.* She doth not say, *Come, see a man that has told me strange things concerning religious worship, and the laws of it, that has decided the controversy between this mountain and Jerusalem, a man that calls himself the Messiah; but come, see a man that has told me of my sins; he fastens upon that part of Christ's discourse, which one would think she should have been most shy of repeating; but experimental proofs of the power of Christ's word and Spirit, are of all other the most cogent and convincing; and that knowledge of Christ into which we are led by the conviction of sin and humiliation, is most likely to be found and saving.*

(2.) She *invites them to come and see him* whom she had conceived so high an opinion of. Not barely come and look upon him, she doth not invite them to him as a *shew*, but come and converse with him, come and *hear his wisdom* as I have done, and you will be of my mind. She would not undertake to manage the arguments which had convinced her in such a manner as to convince others; all that see the evidence of truth themselves are not able to make others see it; but come and talk with him, and you will find such a power in his word, as far exceeds all other evidence. Note, Those who can do little else towards the conviction and conversion of others, may and should bring them to those means of grace, which they themselves have found effectual. Jesus was now at the town's end, now come see him. When opportunities of getting the knowledge of God are brought to our doors, we are inexcusable if we neglect them; shall we not go over the threshold to see him, whose day prophets and kings desire to see?

(3.) She resolves to *appeal to themselves*, and their own sentiments upon the trial, *Is not this the Christ?* She doth not peremptorily say, He is the Messiah, how clear soever she was in her own mind, and yet she very prudently mentions the Messiah, whom otherwise they would not have thought of; and then refers it to themselves; she will not *impose* her faith upon them, but only *propose* it to them. By such fair, but forcible appeals as these, mens judgments and consciences are sometimes taken hold of, ere they are aware.

3. What success she had in this invitation, *ver. 30.* They *went out of the city, and came to him*. Though it might seem very improbable, that a woman of so *small* a figure, and so *ill* a character, should have the honour of the first discovery of the Messiah among the Samaritans; yet it pleased God to incline their hearts to take notice of her report, and not to flight it as an idle tale. Time was, when lepers were the first that brought tidings to Samaria of a great deliverance, *2 Kings vii. 3.* &c. They *came unto him*; did not send for him into the city to them; but, in token of their respect to him, and the earnestness of their desire to see him, they *went out to him*: Those that would know Christ, must meet him where he records his name.

Thirdly, Christ's discourse with his disciples, while the woman was absent, *ver. 31—34.* See how industrious our Lord Jesus was to *redeem time*, to husband every minute of it, and to *fill up* the vacancies of it. When the disciples were gone into the town, his discourse with the woman was *edifying*, and suited to her case; when she was gone into the town, his discourse with them was no less edifying, and suited to their case; it were well if we could *thus* gather up the fragments of time, that none of it may be lost.

Two things are observable in this discourse:

1. How Christ *expresseth the delight* which he himself had in his work. His work was to *seek and save* that which was lost, to go about doing good. Now this work we here find him wholly taken up with.

For, 1. He *neglected his meat and drink for his work*. When he sat down upon the well he was *weary*, and needed refreshment, but this opportunity of saving souls made him forget his weariness and hunger. And he minded *his food* so little, that, (1.) His disciples were forced to invite him to it; they *prayed him*, they pressed him, saying, *Master, eat*. It was an instance of their *love to him*, that they invited him, lest he should be fainty and sick for want of some support; but it was a greater instance of his *love to souls*, that he needed invitation; let us learn hence a holy indifferency, even to the needful supports of life, in comparison with spiritual things. (2.) He minded it so little, that they suspected he had meat brought him in their absence, *ver. 33.* *Has any man brought him ought to eat?* He had so little stomach to his dinner, that they were ready to think he had dined already. They that make religion their business, when any of its affairs are to be attended, will prefer them before their food; as Abraham's servant, that would not eat till he had told his errand, *Gen. xxiv. 33.* and Samuel, that would not sit down till David was anointed, *1 Sam. xvi. 11.*

2. He *made his work his meat and drink*. The work he *had done* in instructing the woman; the work he *had to do* among the Samaritans; the prospect he now had of doing good to many, this was *meat and drink* to him; it was the greatest pleasure and satisfaction imaginable. Never did a hungry man, or an epicure, expect



expect a plentiful feast with so much desire, nor feed upon its dainties with so much delight, as our Lord Jesus expected, and improved an opportunity of doing good to souls. Concerning this he saith, (1.) That it was such *meat* as the disciples *knew not of*. They did not imagine that he had any design or prospect of planting his gospel among the Samaritans; this was a piece of usefulness they never thought of. Note, Christ by his gospel and Spirit doth more good to the souls of men, than his own disciples *knew of*, or *expected*. This may be said of good Christians too who live by faith, that they have meat to eat which others know not of; joy which a stranger doth not intermeddle with. Now this word made them ask, *Has any man brought him ought to eat?* So apt were even his own disciples, to understand him after a corporal and carnal manner when he used similitudes. (2.) That the reason why his work was his meat and drink, was because it was his Father's work, his Father's will; *ver. 34. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me*. Note, (1.) The salvation of sinners is the *will of God*, and the instruction of them in order thereunto, is *his work*: See *1 Tim. ii. 4*. There is a chosen remnant, whose salvation is in a particular manner his will. (2.) Christ was *sent into the world* on this errand, to bring people to God; to know him, and to be happy in him. (3.) He made this work his business and delight. When his body needed food, his mind was so taken up with this, that he forgot both hunger and thirst, both meat and drink. Nothing could be more grateful to him than doing good; when he was invited to *meat*, he went, that he might *do good*, for that was his meat always. (4.) He was not only ready upon all occasions to go to his work, but he was *earnest* and in care to go *through* it, and to *finish* his work, in all the parts of it. He resolved never to quit it, or lay it down till he could say, *It is finished*. Many have zeal to carry them out at first, but not zeal to carry them on to the last; but our Lord Jesus was intent upon *finishing his work*. Our Master has herein left us an example, that we may learn to do the will of God as he did; (1.) With diligence and close application, as those that make a business of it. (2.) With delight and pleasure in it, as in our element. (3.) With constancy and perseverance; not only minding to *do*, but aiming to *finish* our work.

2. See here, how Christ having expressed his delight in his work, *excites* his disciples to *diligence* in their work; they were workers *with him*, and therefore should be workers *like him*; and make their work their *meat*, as he did. The work they had to do, was to *preach the gospel*, and by it to set up the kingdom of the Messiah. Now this work he here compares to *harvest work*, which is the gathering in of the fruits of the earth; and this similitude he prosecutes throughout this discourse, *ver. 35—38*. Note, Gospel time is harvest time, and gospel work harvest work. The harvest is before *appointed* and *expected*, so was the gospel. Harvest time is *busy* time; all hands must be then at work; every one must work for *himself*, that he may reap of the graces and comforts of the gospel: ministers must work *for God*, to gather in souls to him. Harvest time is *opportunity*, a short and limited time, which will not last always; and harvest work is work that must be done *then*, or not at all; so the time of the enjoyment of the gospel is a particular season, which must be improved for its proper purposes; for once past it cannot be recalled.

The disciples were to gather in a harvest of souls for Christ. Now he here suggests three things to them, to quicken them to diligence.

1. That it was *necessary work*, and the *occasion* for it very urgent, and pressing, *ver. 35. Ye say, it is four months to harvest, but I say, The fields are already white*. Here is, (1.) A saying of Christ's disciples concerning the *corn-harvest*; there are yet *four months and then comes harvest*; which may be taken either generally; you say for the encouragement of the sower at seed-time, that it will be but four months to the harvest. With us it is but about four months between the barley seedness, and the barley harvest; probably it was so with them as to other grain; or particularly, now at this time you reckon it will be four months to next harvest, according to the ordinary course of providence. The Jews harvest began at the passover, about Easter, much earlier in the year than ours; by which it appears, that this journey of Christ from Judea to Galilee, was in the winter, about the end of November, for he travelled *all weathers* to do good. God has not only promised us a harvest every year, but has appointed the *weeks of harvest*; so that we know *when* to expect it, and take our measures accordingly. (2.) Here is a saying of Christ's concerning the *gospel harvest*; his heart was as much upon the fruits of his gospel, as the hearts of others were upon the fruits of the earth; and to that he would lead the thoughts of his disciples. *Look, the fields are already white unto the harvest*. 1. Here in this place where they now were, there was harvest-work for him to do. They would have him to eat, *ver. 31. Eat, saith he, I have other work to do that is more needful; look what crowds of Samaritans are coming out of the town, over the fields, that are ready to receive the gospel; probably there were many now in view*. Peoples forwardness to hear the word, is a great excitement to ministers diligence and liveliness in preaching it.

2. In *others places*, all the country over, there was harvest work enough for them all to do. *Consider the regions*; think of the state of the country, and you will find there are multitudes as ready to receive the gospel, as a field of corn that is fully ripe is ready to be reaped. The fields were now made *white to the harvest*, (1.) By the *decree of God* revealed in the prophecies of the Old Testament. Now was the time when the gathering of the people should be to Christ, *Gen. xiv. 10*. when great accessions should be made to the church, and the bounds of it should be enlarged, and therefore it was time for them to be busy. It is a great encouragement to us to engage in any work for God, if we understand by the signs of the times, that this is the proper season for that work, for then it will prosper. (2.) By the *disposition of men*. John Baptist had *made ready a people prepared for the Lord*, Luke i. 17. Since he began to preach the kingdom of God, *every man pressed into it*, Luke xvi. 16. This therefore was a time for the preachers of the gospel to apply themselves to their work with the utmost vigour; to *thrust in their sickle*, when the harvest was ripe, *Rev. xiv. 15*. It was *necessary* to work now, pity such a season should be let slip. If the corn that is *ripe* be not reaped it will *shed*, and be lost, and the fowls will pick it up. If souls that are under convictions, and have some good inclinations be not helped now, their hopeful beginnings will come to nothing, and they will be a prey to pretenders: It was also *easy* to work now; when the peoples hearts are *prepared*, the work will be done *suddenly*, *2 Chron. xxix. 36*. It cannot but quicken ministers to take pains in preaching the word, when they observe that people *take pleasure* in hearing it.

2. That it was *profitable*, and *advantageous* work, which they themselves would be gainers by; *ver. 36. He that reapeth receiveth wages*, and so shall you. Christ has undertaken to pay those well whom he employs in his work; for he will never do as Jehoiakim did, that *used his neighbour's service without wages*, *Jer. xxii. 13*. or those, who *by fraud kept back the hire of those* particularly *who reaped down their corn fields*, *Jam. v. 4*. Christ's reapers, though they cry to him day and night, shall never have cause to cry *against him*, nor to say they served a hard master. He that reapeth, not only *shall* receive wages, but *doth* receive it. There is a present reward in the service of Christ, and his work is *its own wages*.

(1.) Christ's reapers have *fruit*; *he gathereth fruit unto life eternal*, i. e. he shall both save himself and those that hear him, *1 Tim. iv. 16*. If the faithful reaper save his own soul, that is fruit abounding to his account, it is fruit gathered to *life eternal*. And if over and above this, he be instrumental to save the souls of others too, there is *fruit gathered*; souls gathered to Christ are fruit, good fruit, the fruit that Christ seeks for, *Rom. i. 13*. it is gathered for Christ, *Cant. viii. 11, 12*. it is gathered to *life eternal*. This is the comfort of faithful ministers, that their work has a tendency to the eternal salvation of precious souls.

(2.) They have *joy*; *that he that sows, and they that reap may rejoice together*. The minister who is the happy instrument of beginning a good work, is *he that sows*, as John Baptist was: He that is employed to carry it on, and perfect it, is *he that reaps*, and both shall rejoice together. Note, 1. Though God is to have all the glory of the success of the gospel, yet faithful ministers may themselves take the comfort of it. The reapers share in the *joy of harvest*, though the profits belong to the master, *1 Thes. ii. 19*. 2. Those ministers who are variously gifted and employed, should be so far from envying one another, that they should rather mutually rejoice in each other's success and usefulness. Though all Christ's ministers are not alike *serviceable*, nor alike *successful*, yet if they have obtained mercy of the Lord to be *faithful*, they shall all enter *together into the joy of their Lord* at last.

3. That it was *easy work*, and work that was half done to their hands by those that were gone before them; *ver. 37, 38. One soweth and another reapeth*. This sometimes speaks a grievous judgment upon him that sows, *Mic. vi. 15. Deut. xxviii. 30. Thou shalt sow, and another shall reap*; as *Deut. vi. 11. Houses full of all good things which thou filledst not*. So here, Moses and the prophets, and John Baptist had *paved* the way to the gospel, had sown the good seed, which the New Testament ministers did in effect but gather the fruit of. *I send you to reap that whereon ye bestowed*, in comparison, no labour, *Isa. xl. 3, 4, 5*.

This speaks *two things* concerning the Old Testament ministry. (1.) That it was very much *short* of the New Testament ministry. Moses and the prophets sowed, but they could not be said to reap, so little did they see of the fruit of their labours. Their writings have done much more good since they left us, than ever their preaching did. (2.) That it was very much *serviceable* to the New Testament ministry, and made way for it; the writings of the prophets, which were read in the synagogues every sabbath-day, raised peoples expectations of the Messiah, and so prepared them to bid him welcome. Had it not been for the seed sown by the prophets, this Samaritan woman could not have said, *We know that the Messiah cometh*. The writings of the Old Testament



Testament are in some respect more useful to us, than they could be to those to whom they were first written, because better understood by the accomplishment of them. See 1 Pet. i. 12. Heb. iv. 2. Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

This also speaks *two things* concerning the ministry of the apostles of Christ. (1.) That it was a *fruitful* ministry; they were reapers that gathered in a great harvest of souls to Jesus Christ, and did more in seven years towards the setting up of the kingdom of God among men, than the prophets of the Old Testament had done in twice so many ages. (2.) That it was much *facilitated*, especially among the Jews, to whom they were first sent, by the writings of the prophets. The prophets *sowed in tears*, crying out, *we have laboured in vain*; the apostles *reaped in joy*, saying, *Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph*. Note, From the labours of ministers that are dead and gone, much good fruit may be reaped by the people that *survive* them, and the ministers that *succeed* them. John Baptist, and those that assisted him, had *laboured*, and the disciples of Christ entered into their labours, built upon their foundation, and reaped the fruit of what they sowed. See what reason we have to bless God for those that are *gone before us*, for their preaching and their writing; for what they *did*, and *suffered* in their day, for we are *entered into their labours*; their studies and services have made our work the easier. And when the ancient and modern labourers, those that came into the vineyard at the third hour, and those that came in at the eleventh meet in the day of account, they will be so far from envying one another the honour of their respective services, that both *they that sowed*, and *they that reaped* shall rejoice together; and the great Lord of the harvest shall have the glory of all.

Fourthly, The *good effect* which this visit Christ made to the Samaritans (*en passant*) had upon them, and the fruit which was now presently gathered among them; ver. 39—42. See what impressions were made on them.

1. By the *woman's testimony* concerning Christ; though a single testimony, and of one of no good report, and the testimony no more but this, *He told me all that ever I did*; yet it had a good influence upon many. One would have thought his telling the woman of her secret sins, should have made them afraid of coming to him, lest he should tell them also of their faults; but they will venture that, rather than not be acquainted with one that they had reason to think was a prophet. And *two things* they were brought to.

1. To *credit Christ's word*, ver. 39. *Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman*. So far they believed on him, that they took him for a prophet, and were desirous to know the mind of God from him; this is favourably interpreted a believing on him. Now observe,

(1.) Who they were that believed; *many of the Samaritans*, who were not of the house of Israel. Their faith was not only an *aggravation* of the *unbelief* of the Jews, from whom better might have been expected, but an *earnest* of the *faith* of the Gentiles, who would welcome that which the Jews rejected.

(2.) Upon what inducement they believed; *for the saying of the woman*. See here, (1.) How God is sometimes pleased to use very weak and unlikely instruments for the beginning and carrying on of a good work. A little maid directed a great prince to Elisha, 2 Kings v. 2. (2.) How great a matter a little fire kindles: Our Saviour, by instructing one poor woman, spread instruction to a whole town. Let not ministers be either *careless* in their preaching, or *discouraged* in it because their hearers are *few* and *mean*, for by doing good to *them*, good may be conveyed to *more*, and those that are more considerable: If they *teach every man his neighbour*, and *every man his brother*, a great number may learn at *second hand*. Philip preached the gospel to a single gentleman in his chariot upon the road, and he not only received it himself, but carried it into his country, and propagated it there. (3.) See how good it is to speak *experimentally* of Christ and the things of God. This woman could say little of Christ, but what she did say she spoke feelingly; *He told me all that ever I did*. Those are most likely to do good, that can tell what God has done *for their souls*, Psal. lxvi. 16.

2. They were brought to *court his stay* among them; ver. 40. when they were come to him, they *besought him that he would tarry with them*. Upon the woman's report they believed him to be a prophet, and *came to him*; and when they *saw* him, the meanness of his appearance, and the manifest poverty of his outward condition, did not lessen their esteem of him, and expectations from him, but still they respected him as a prophet. Note, There are hopes of those who are got over the vulgar prejudices that men have against *true worth* in a *low estate*. Blessed are they that are not offended in Christ at the *first sight*. So far were they from being offended in him, that they begged he would tarry with them. (1.) That they might *testify their respects* to him, and treat him with the honour and kindness due to his character. God's prophets and ministers are welcome guests to all those who sincerely embrace the gospel; as to Lydia, Acts xvi. 15. (2.) That they might receive instruction from him. Those that are taught of God, are truly desirous to learn more, and to be better acquainted with Christ. Many would have flocked to one that would tell them *their fortune*, but these flocked to one that would tell them

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*their faults*; tell them of sin and duty. The historian seems to lay an emphasis upon their being Samaritans, as Luke x. 33.—xvii. 16. The Samaritans had not that reputation for religion that the Jews had, yet the Jews who saw Christ's miracles drove him from them, while the Samaritans who saw not his miracles, nor shared in his favours, invited him to them. The *proof* of the gospel's success, is not always according to the *probability*, nor what is *experienced*, according to what is *expected* either way. The Samaritans were taught by the custom of their country, to be shy of conversation with the Jews. There were Samaritans that refused to let Christ go through their town, Luke ix. 52. Yet these begged him to tarry with them. Note, It adds much to the praise of our love to Christ and his word, if it conquers the prejudices of education and custom, and sets light by the censures of men.

Now we are told that Christ granted their request. (1.) He *abode there*. Though it was a city of the Samaritans, near adjoining to their temple, yet when he was *invited*, he *tarry*ed there; though he was upon a journey, and had further to go, yet when he had an opportunity of doing good he *abode there*. That is no real *hinderance* which will *further* our account. Yet he abode there but *two days*, because he had other places to visit, and other work to do, and those *two days* were as many as came to the share of this city, out of the few days of our Saviour's sojourning upon earth.

2. We are told what impressions were made upon them by Christ's own word, and his personal converse with them, ver. 41, 42. what he *said* and *did* there is not related; whether he healed their sick or no, but it is intimated in the effect, that he said and did that which convinced them that he was the Christ; and the labours of a minister are best told by the good fruit of them. Their hearing of him had a good effect, but *now their eyes see him*; and the effect of that was,

1. That their number grew; ver. 41. *Many more believed*: many that would not be persuaded to go out of the town to him, yet when he came among them were wrought upon to believe in him. Note, It is comfortable to see the number of believers; and sometimes the zeal and forwardness of some may be a means to provoke many, and to stir them up to a holy emulation, Rom. xi. 14.

2. That their faith grew. Those who had been wrought upon by the report of the woman, now saw cause to say, *Now we believe not for thy saying*, ver. 42.

Here are three things in which their faith grew.

1. In the matter of it, or that which they did believe. Upon the testimony of the woman, they believed him to be a prophet, or some extraordinary messenger from heaven, but now they have conversed with him, they believe that he is *the Christ*, the *anointed one*, the very same that was promised to the fathers, and expected by them; and that being the *Christ* he is the *Saviour of the world*; for that was the work to which he was anointed, to *save his people from their sins*. They believed him to be the Saviour, not only of the Jews, but *of the world*; which they hoped would take them in, though Samaritans, for it was promised that he should be *salvation to the ends of the earth*, Isa. xlix. 6.

2. In the *certainty* of it; their faith now grew up to a full assurance; we know that this is indeed the *Christ*; *Χριστός*; not a pretended Christ, but a real one; not a *typical* Saviour, as many under the Old Testament, but *truly* one. Such an assurance as this of divine truths is what we should labour after; not only we think it probable, and are willing to suppose, that *Jesus* may be the *Christ*, but we know that he is *indeed the Christ*.

3. In the *ground* of it, which was a kind of spiritual sensation and experience: *Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves*. They had before believed *for her saying*, and it was well, it was a good step; but now they find *further*, and much *firmer* footing for their faith; *now we believe*, because we have *heard him ourselves*, and have heard such excellent and divine truths, accompanied with such commanding power and evidence, that we are abundantly satisfied and assured that *this is the Christ*. This is like what the queen of Sheba said of Solomon, 1 Kings x. 6, 7. *The one half was not told me*. The Samaritans who believed for the woman's saying, now gained further light, for *to him that hath shall be given*: He that is faithful in a little shall be trusted with more.

In this instance we may see how *faith comes by hearing*. (1.) Faith comes *to the birth* by hearing the *report of men*. These Samaritans for the sake of the woman's saying, believed so far as to *come and see*, to come and make trial. Thus the instructions of parents and preachers, and the testimony of the church, and our experienced neighbours, *recommend* the doctrine of Christ *to our acquaintance*, and incline us to entertain it as highly probable. But, (2.) Faith comes *to its growth*, strength, and maturity, by hearing the testimony of Christ himself; and this goes further, and recommends his doctrine *to our acceptance*, and obligeth us to believe it as undoubtedly certain. We were induced to look into the scriptures, *by the saying* of those who told us, that in them they had found eternal life; but when we ourselves found it in them too, have experienced the enlightening, convincing, regenerating, sanctifying, comforting power of the word, now we believe,



believe, *not for their saying*, but because we have searched them ourselves. And our faith *stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 5. 1 John v. 9, 10.

Thus was the seed of the gospel sown in Samaria; what effect there was of this afterward, doth not appear, but we find that four or five years after, when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, he found such blessed remains of this good work now wrought, that the *people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spoke*, Acts viii. 5, 6, 8. But as some were pliable to good, so were others to evil, whom Simon Magus bewitched with his forceries, *ver. 9, 10.*

43. ¶ Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee: 44. For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country: 45. Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast. 46. So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. 47. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. 48. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. 49. The noble man saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. 50. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. 51. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. 52. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend: and they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. 53. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house. 54. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

In these verses we have,

First, Christ's coming into Galilee, *ver. 43.* Though he was as welcome among the Samaritans as he could be any where, and had better success, yet *after two days* he left them; not so much because they were Samaritans, and he would not confirm those in their prejudices against him, who said, *He is a Samaritan*, (John viii. 48.) but because *he must preach to other cities*, Luke iv. 43. He went into Galilee, for there he spent much of his time. Now see here,

1. Whither Christ went; into Galilee, into the country of Galilee, but not to Nazareth, which was strictly *his own country*; he went among the villages, but declined going to Nazareth, the head city, for a reason here given, which *Jesus himself testified*, who knew the temper of his country-men, the hearts of all men, and the experiences of all prophets, and it is this, That *a prophet has no honour in his own country*. Note, (1.) Prophets ought to have honour, because God has put honour upon them, and we do or may receive benefit by them. (2.) The honour due to the Lord's prophets, has very often been denied them, and contempt put upon them. (3.) This due honour is most frequently denied them *in their own country*, see Luke iv. 24. Matt. xiii. 57. not that it is universally true; no rule but hath some exceptions, but it holds for the most part. Joseph, when he began to be a prophet, was most hated by his brethren; David disdained by his brother, 1 Sam. xvii. 28. Jeremiah maligned by the men of Anathoth, Jer. xi. 21. Paul by his countrymen the Jews; and Christ's near kinsmen spoke most slightly of him, John vii. 5. Mens pride and envy makes them scorn to be instructed by those, that, when time was, were their school-fellows, and play-fellows. Desire of novelty, and of that which is far fetched, and dear bought, and seems to drop out of the sky to them, makes them despise those persons and things which they have been long used to, and know the rise of. (4.) It is a great discouragement to a minister, to go among a people that have no value for him or his labours. Christ would not go to Nazareth, because he knew how little respect he should have there. (5.) It is just with God to deny his gospel to those that despise the ministers of it. They that mock the messengers, forfeit the benefit of the message, Matt. xxi. 35, 41.

2. What entertainment he met with among the Galileans in the country, *ver. 45.* They received him, bad him welcome, and cheerfully attended on his doctrine. Christ and his gospel are not sent in vain; if they had not honour with *some*, they shall have with *others*. Now the reason given why these Galileans were so ready to receive Christ, is because they had *seen the miracles he did at Jerusalem*, *ver. 45.* Observe, (1.) They went up to Jerusalem at the feast, the feast of the passover. The Ga-

lileans lay very remote from Jerusalem, and their way thither lay through the country of the Samaritans, which was troublesome for a Jew to pass through, worse than Baca's valley of old; yet in obedience to God's command, they *went up to the feast*, and there they became acquainted with Christ. Note, They that are diligent and constant in attending on publick ordinances, some time or other meet with more spiritual benefit than they expect. (2.) At Jerusalem they *saw* Christ's miracles, which recommended him and his doctrine very much to their faith and affections. The miracles were wrought for the benefit of them at Jerusalem, yet the Galileans, who were accidentally there, got more advantage by them, than they did for whom they were chiefly designed. Thus the word preached to a *mixed multitude* may perhaps edify *occasional* hearers more than the *constant* auditory.

3. What city he went to when he would go to a city; he chose to go to Cana of Galilee, *where he had made the water wine*, *ver. 46.* thither he went to see if there were any good fruits of that miracle remaining; and if there were, to confirm their faith, and to water what he had planted. The evangelist mentions this miracle here, to teach us to keep in remembrance what we have seen of the works of Christ.

Secondly, His curing of the nobleman's son that was sick of a fever. This story is not recorded by any other of the evangelists; it comes in Matt. iv. 23.

Observe, 1. Who the petitioner was, and who the patient; the petitioner was a nobleman, the patient was his son: *There was a certain nobleman*. *Regulus*, so the Latin, a little king; so called, either for the largeness of his estate, or the extent of his power, or the royalties that belonged to his manour. Some understand it as speaking his *preference*, he was a courtier, in some office about the king; others, as speaking his *party*, he was an Herodian, a royalist, a prerogative man, one that espoused the interest of the Herods, father and son; perhaps it was Chuza, Herod's steward, Luke viii. 3. or Manaen, Herod's foster-brother, Acts xiii. 1. There were saints in Cæsar's household. The father a nobleman, and yet the son sick; for dignities, and titles of honour, will be no security to persons and families from the assaults of sickness and death. It was fifteen miles from Capernaum where this nobleman lived, to Cana, where Christ now was, yet this affliction in his family sent him so far to Christ.

2. How the petitioner made his application to the physician. Having heard that *Jesus was come out of Judea to Galilee*, and finding that he did not come towards Capernaum, but turned off towards the other side of the country, he *went to him* himself, and *besought him to come and heal his son*, *ver. 47.* See here, (1.) His tender affection to his son, that when he was sick he would spare no pains to get help for him. (2.) His great respect to our Lord Jesus; that he would come himself to wait upon him, when he might have sent a servant; and that he *besought him*, when, as a man in authority, some would think, he might have ordered his attendance. The greatest men when they come to God, must become beggars, and sue *sub forma pauperis*.

As to the errand he came upon, we may observe a mixture in his faith. (1.) There was sincerity in it, he did believe that Christ could heal his son, though his disease was dangerous. It is likely he had physicians to him, who had given him over, but he believed that Christ could cure him when the case seemed deplorable. (2.) Yet there was infirmity in his faith, he believed that Christ could heal his son, but, as it should seem, he thought he could not heal him at a distance, and therefore he besought him that he would *come down* and heal him, expecting, as Naaman did, that he will come and *strike his hand* over the patient, as if he could not cure him but by a *physical contact*. Thus are we apt to limit the Holy One of Israel, and to stint him to our forms. The centurion, a Gentile, a soldier, was so strong in faith, as to say, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof*, Matt. viii. 8. This nobleman, a Jew, must have Christ to come down, though it was a good day's journey, and despaired of a cure unless he come down, as if he must teach Christ how to work. We are encouraged to pray, but we are not allowed to prescribe; Lord, heal me, but whether with a word, or a touch, *Thy will be done*.

3. The gentle rebuke he met with in this address, *ver. 48.* *Jesus said to him*, I see how it is, *Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe*, as the Samaritans did, though they saw no signs and wonders, and therefore I must work miracles among you. Though he was a nobleman, and now in grief about his son, and had shewed great respect to Christ in coming so far to him, yet Christ gives him a reproof; mens dignity in the world shall not exempt them from the rebukes of the word or providence; for Christ reproves not *after the hearing of his ears*, but *with equity*, Isa. xi. 3. Observe, Christ first shews him his sin and weakness, to prepare him for mercy, and then grants him his request. Christ humbles those first with his frowns, whom he intends to honour with his favours. The Comforter shall first convince. Herod longed to see some miracle, Luke xxiii. 8. and this courtier was of the same mind, and the generality of the people too.



Now that which is blamed, is, (1.) That whereas they had heard by credible and incontestable report of the miracles he had wrought in other places, they would not believe except they saw them with their own eyes, *Luke iv. 23.* they must be *honoured*, and they must be *humoured*, or they will not be *convinced*. Their country must be graced, and their curiosity gratified with signs and wonders, or else, though the doctrine of Christ be sufficiently proved by miracles wrought elsewhere, they will not believe; like Thomas, they will yield to no method of conviction but what they shall prescribe. (2.) That whereas they had seen divers miracles which they could not gainsay the evidence of, but which sufficiently prove Christ a teacher come from God, and should have applied themselves to him for instruction in his doctrine, which by its native excellency would have gently led them on in believing to a spiritual perfection; instead of this, they would go no further in believing, than they were driven by signs and wonders. The spiritual power of the word did not affect them, did not attract them, but only the sensible power of miracles, which were for them who believe not, but prophesying for them that believe, *1 Cor. xiv. 22.* Those that admire miracles only, and despise prophesying, rank themselves with unbelievers.

4. His continued importunity in his address, *ver. 49. Sir, come down ere my child die.* *Kύεε, Lord,* so it should be rendered. In this reply of his we have,

1. Something that was commendable; he took the reproof patiently, he spoke to Christ respectfully; though he was one of those that wore soft clothing, yet he could bear this reproof. It is none of the privileges of peerage to be above the reproofs of the word of Christ; but it is a sign of a good temper and disposition in men, especially in great men, when they can be told of their faults and not be angry. And as he did not take the reproof for an affront, so he did not take it for a denial, but still prosecuted his request, and continued to wrestle till he prevailed. Nay, he might argue thus, If Christ heal my soul, sure he will heal my son; if he cure my unbelief, he will cure his fever. This is the method Christ takes, first to work upon us, and then to work for us; and there is hopes, if we find him entering upon his method.

2. Here is something that was blame-worthy; that was his infirmity; for, 1. He seems to take no notice of the reproof Christ gave him, faith nothing to it, either by way of confession, or excuse, for he is so wholly taken up with concern about his child, that he can mind nothing else. Note, The sorrow of the world is a great prejudice to our profiting by the word of Christ: Inordinate care and grief are thorns that choke the good seed, see *Exod. vi. 9.* 2. He still discovered the weakness of his faith in the power of Christ. (1.) He must have Christ to come down, thinking, else he could do the child no kindness. It is hard to persuade ourselves, that distance of time and place are no obstructions to the knowledge and power of our Lord Jesus; yet so it is, he sees afar off, for his eyes run to and fro; and he acts afar off, for his word, the word of his power, runs very swiftly. (2.) He believes Christ could heal a sick child, but not that he could raise a dead child, and therefore, *O come down ere my child die*; as if then, it would be too late; whereas Christ has the same power over death, that he has over bodily diseases. He forgot that Elijah and Elisha had raised dead children, and is Christ's power inferior to theirs? Observe what haste he is in; *Come down, ere my child die*; as if there were danger of Christ's slipping his time. *He that believeth doth not make haste*, but refers himself to Christ, Lord, what, and when, and how, thou pleasest.

Fifthly, The answer of peace which Christ gave to his request at last, *ver. 50. Go thy way, thy son liveth.* Christ here gives us an instance,

1. Of his power; that he not only could heal, but could heal with so much ease, without the trouble of a visit. Here is nothing said, nothing done, nothing ordered to be done, and yet the cure wrought; *thy son liveth.* The healing beams of the sun of righteousness disperse benign influences from one end of heaven to another, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. Though Christ is now in heaven, and his church on earth, he can send from above. This nobleman would have Christ come down and heal his son. Christ will heal his son and not come down; and thus the cure is the sooner wrought, and the nobleman's mistakes rectified, and his faith confirmed; so that the thing was better done in Christ's way. When he denies what we ask, he gives what is much more to our advantage; we ask for ease, he gives patience. Observe, His power was exerted by his word: In saying, *thy son lives*, he shewed that he has life in himself, and power to quicken whom he will. Christ's saying *thy soul lives*, makes it alive.

2. Of his pity; he observed the nobleman to be in pain about his son, and his natural affection discovered it self in that word, *ere my child, my dear child, die*, and therefore Christ dropped the reproof, and gave him assurance of the recovery of his child; for he knows how a father pities his children.

Sixthly, The nobleman's belief of the word of Christ; he believed, and went away. Though Christ did not gratify him so far, as to go down with him, he is satisfied with the method

Christ took, and reckons he has gained his point. How quickly, how easily is that which is lacking in our faith, perfected by the word and power of Christ. Now he sees no sign or wonder, and yet believes the wonder done.

1. Christ said, *Thy son liveth*, and the man believed him; not only believed the omniscience of Christ, that he knew the child recovered, but the omnipotence of Christ, that the cure was effected by his word. He left him dying, yet when Christ said, *he lives*, like the father of the faithful, against hope he believed in hope; and staggered not through unbelief.

2. Christ said, *Go thy way*, and as an evidence of the sincerity of his faith, he went his way, and gave neither Christ nor himself any further disturbance. He did not press Christ to come down, did not say, if he do recover, yet a visit will be acceptable; no, he seems no further solicitous, but, like Hannah, he goes his way, and his countenance is no more sad. As one entirely satisfied, he made no great haste home; did not hurry home that night, but returned leisurely, as one that was perfectly easy in his own mind.

Seventhly, The further confirmation of his faith, by comparing notes with his servants at his return.

1. His servants met him with the agreeable news of the child's recovery, *ver. 51.* Probably they met him not far from his own house, and knowing what their master's cares were, they were willing, as soon as they could, to make him easy. David's servants were loth to tell him when the child was dead. Christ said, *Thy son liveth*, and now the servants say the same. Good news will meet those that hope in God's word.

2. He enquired what hour the child began to recover, *ver. 52.* not as if he doubted the influence of Christ's word upon the child's recovery, but he was desirous to have his faith confirmed, and might be able to satisfy any to whom he should relate it; for it was a material circumstance. Note, 1. It is good to furnish ourselves with all the corroborating proofs and evidences that may be to strengthen our faith in the word of Christ, that it may grow up to a full assurance; show me a token for good.

2. The diligent comparing of the works of Christ with his word, will be of great use to us for the confirming of our faith. That was the course this nobleman took; He enquired of the servants the hour when he began to amend, and they told him yesterday at the seventh hour, (at one a clock in the afternoon, or, as some think this evangelist reckons, at seven a clock at night) the fever left him; not only he began to amend, but he was perfectly well on a sudden; so the father knew that it was at the same hour, when Jesus said to him, *Thy son liveth*. As the word of God, well studied, will help us to understand his providences; so the providence of God, well observed, will help us to understand his word, for God is every day fulfilling the scripture. Two things would help to confirm his faith. 1. That the child's recovery was sudden, and not gradual. They name the precise time to an hour, yesterday, not about, but at the seventh hour the fever left him; not it abated, or began to decrease, but left him in an instant. The word of Christ did not work like physick, which must have time to operate, and produce the effect, and perhaps cures by expectation only, no, with Christ it was dictum, factum, he spake and it was done; not, he spake and it was set a doing. 2. That it was just at the same time that Christ spoke to him, At that very hour. The synchronisms and co-incidences of events, add very much to the beauty and harmony of providence. Observe the time, and the thing itself will be more illustrious, for every thing is beautiful in its time; at the very time when it is promised, as Israel's deliverance, *Exod. xii. 41.* at the very time when it is prayed for, as Peter's deliverance, *Acts xii. 12.* In mens works, distance of place is the delay of time, and the retarding of business, but it is not so in the works of Christ. The pardon, and peace, and comfort, and spiritual healing, which he speaks in heaven, is, if he pleases, at the same time effected and wrought in the souls of believers; and when these two come to be compared in the great day, Christ will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

Eighthly, The happy effect and issue of this. The bringing of the cure to the family brought salvation to it.

1. The nobleman himself believed. He had before believed the word of Christ with reference to this particular occasion, but now he believed in Christ as the Messiah promised, and became one of his disciples. Thus the particular experience of the power and efficacy of one word of Christ, may be a happy means to introduce and settle the whole authority of Christ's dominion in the soul. Christ has many ways of gaining the heart, and by the grant of a temporal mercy, may make way for better things.

2. His whole house believed likewise. (1.) Because of the interest they all had in the miracle, which preserved the blossom and hopes of the family; this affected them all, and endeared Christ to them, and recommended him to their best thoughts. (2.) Because of the influence the master of the family had upon them all. A master of a family cannot give faith to those under his charge, nor force them to believe, but he may be instrumental to remove external prejudices which obstruct the operation of the evidence, and then the work is more than half done. Abraham was famous for this, *Gen. xviii. 19.* and Joshua, *chap. xxiv. 15.*

This